

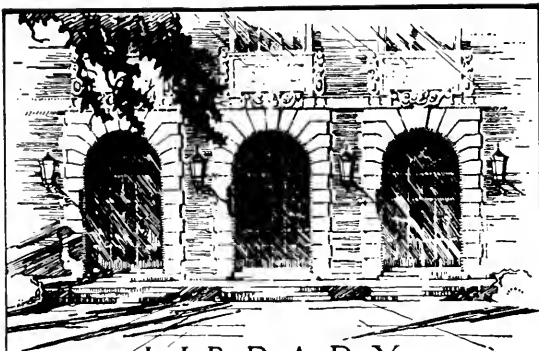


THOMAS HENRY FARRER.

ABINGER HALL.

M 6

Uncle Charles Darwin
pronounced himself much
devoted to 4 Fair Cares



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THE FAIR CAREW;
OR,
HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

“Why did I marry?”—OTHELLO.

Ditto

—LORD TOWNLY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1851.

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THE FAIR CAREW; OR, HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

CHAPTER I.

MR. FOTHERGILL and his fair friends reached their journey's end without having encountered any incident worthy of notice. There had been a time when the necessity of passing so many hours in the sole companionship of the pair with whom fate had so suddenly linked her, would have seemed to Selby a penance of no ordinary kind; but now she was little disposed to fret at the minor inconveniences of life: she even felt it as a relief, to be spared that strain upon her mind, which a higher order of intelligence on the part of her companions might have induced.

A slight degree of civil attention sufficed to keep up her character for sociability, and to carry on the stream of conversation (if such it might be called) which ran sometimes in a monotonous murmur, or bubbled into froth and idle spray, according as prosy

age or frivolous youth directed its course. Such small impediments could scarcely interrupt the undercurrent of Selby's thoughts, which was flowing all the while so fast and forcibly.

It was not, however, this unexpected journey or its cause, yet unexplained, that occupied her: in shewing such a prompt obedience to her mother's instructions, she seemed to think her duty for the present done, and now employed herself comparatively little in guessing the end and purpose of the step she had been required to take. Her meditations were less upon the future than the past. She was reviewing and reacting those scenes of varied interest in which she had lately taken part, or else sadly contrasting this second visit to London with her first journey thither: she was recalling her former sensations, and recollecting how, amidst all her increasing doubts, and the workings of a conscience too susceptible to be long at rest, a certain tremulous joy had still arisen—a vision of approaching happiness—in the firm assurance that the being dearest to her in all the world was awaiting her approach, burning with impatience to greet her, and make her his own for ever. It was not only Luttrell's outward presence that was to fail her now: his very love had become matter of doubt and miserable speculation. She felt herself twenty years older, at least, than the Selby Carew of that agitating yet most interesting period; and could hardly believe that four years only had passed since then.

As the way drew to a close, and the fatigue of a long day's journey began to take effect on mind and

body, such musings naturally grew darker and more desponding. Her fellow-travellers also, hitherto so loquacious, had gradually succumbed to the weakness of the flesh. Mr. Fothergill was dozing: dreaming, it may be, of the reception he had to expect from the redoubtable Mrs. Hoskins; for his slumbers were uneasy, and he would wake up now and then in a little bustle, and apologize for his ill-manners; while Fanny Marsham's poor little head, tired out with its unwonted excitement, fairly sank upon Selby's shoulder; on which soft pillow it slept intensely, happily, free from one ceremonious scruple. Selby turned her sweet eyes on the young thing, so misgoverned, so helpless in her girlish levity; and then with a sentiment of pity, which would have been incomprehensible to the young lady's mother or governess, she threw her arm round Fanny, the better to support and make her comfortable.

In this sombre fashion, the last stages of the journey were performed; and when Mr. Fothergill and his youthful charge were safely deposited in Westminster, the old gentleman punctually fulfilled his promise of taking care of Miss Carew: not personally indeed, but by a highly accredited proxy; for the faithful John, second only in confidence and command to the great Hoskins herself, was ordered to attend the young lady, and see her conveyed with all care and circumspection to her journey's end.

This ultimate termination of her travels, Selby naturally presumed to be that well-remembered hotel in the Adelphi, from whence her mother's letter had been dated; but on arriving there she was directed

to a lodging-house in Maddox-street, to which Mrs. Carew had that morning removed. And here, having eventually conducted the weary traveller, and deposited her under the shadow of the maternal wing, we must cast back a short glance over the previous adventures of Mrs. Carew herself.

On first receiving Mrs. Bradshaw's threatening visit, and hearing her husband accused of such a serious and disgraceful offence, she had gone almost distracted; for although, while the woman was present, she affected to disbelieve her story, Charlotte Carew was not, in fact, blessed with that measure of confidence in the prudence and propriety of the insinuating John, which might have made the charge appear to her a thing wholly incredible. She wrote to him, of course, instantly and urgently, and his answer tended little to allay her fears: nothing, indeed, short of an indignant denial of the whole story could have reassured her; and still more satisfactory would have been the establishment of that favourite measure of Mr. Weller, senior, viz., the proving an *alibi*.

Instead of this, however, Carew not only acknowledged to a former acquaintance with the proprietor of the Red Lion, but admitted that some silly passages of courting, and even of matrimony, (though all, of course, in joke) had been played off between them. His youth, and the exuberant spirits that had so often led him astray, being his only excuse for such folly.

"This woman," he wrote, "who was the very epitome of vulgar absurdity, and a little crazy into the bar-

gain, was possessed with the ambition of becoming an officer's wife; and I and some of my wild associates, who, when we came on shore, were in the habit of frequenting her house—you remember Macnamara, and that young Johnson whom you, my Charlotte, so often warned me against? Well, by way of a frolic, we drew lots one day to determine which of us should act bridegroom, in a sham wedding with our hostess, which another of the middies belonging to the *Shark* was to solemnize in a black suit borrowed for the occasion. How the silly affair ended," continued Carew, "I really am at a loss to say; for, as you may well conceive, none of the assembly—bride and bride's-maid inclusive—were over and above sober during the ceremony. All I can remember, is a wild scene of mirth and disorder; a violent scuffle, without apparent end or aim; a fight, a crashing of glasses, a rolling under the table; and then a long forgetfulness, ill described by the blessed name of 'sleep,' followed on awaking by the intensest of headaches.

"As for any serious responsibility occurring from the performance of a farce like this, such an idea never entered my head, or was dreamed of by my friends,—'jolly companions every one.' We had carried out a laughable frolic, inspired by the pure love of fun, and thought no more of the matter. From her subsequent conduct, however, I can now imagine that the woman Bradshaw might have had deeper designs in all this than we suspected: she probably thought that my family might be worked upon, by a garbled account of my boyish frolic, to

supply her with hush-money, and bribe her to silence. And, in truth, had the story, told after her fashion, ever reached the ears of Lord Elderton, that stiffest of admirals and pattern of all naval decorum, farewell to his patronage and protection: in short, before the matter could have been cleared up, I should have been utterly ruined in my profession. My supposed death in the *Spiteful* (which sailed the very day after this whimsical transaction) prevented her no doubt from carrying out the plot. And on your account, my dear Charlotte, I heartily wish she were still ignorant of my existence; for I see how much she has already annoyed you: though really and truly I can assure you"——

At this point, Carew's pen stopped short in its easy and rapid course. In a sincere and affectionate desire to soothe the agitated spirit of his wife, he was trying to impress her with the conviction that her fears were wholly groundless; and that by no possible exercise of her native effrontery would she of the Red Lion be able to injure him in public estimation. He was seeking some really weighty arguments to fortify his assertion, when, lo! as we have said, the pen was uplifted—the writer mused—the honest expression of his features changed to a knowing look, and a smile that plainly said, "Well done, John, my man! you have hit upon a singularly bright idea." And thereupon resuming the goose-quill, he proceeded to tell his wife that, though he had no fears of what this vulgar woman could do to injure him; yet, as he knew her to be connected with a low clique who were ready to swear to anything for an

extra pot of ale, it was certainly in her power to give him some vexation.

Well did he know how revolting to the delicacy of his "dear Charlotte," would be anything like notoriety in an affair of this sort; and, therefore, in consideration to *her* feelings, he should immediately, on receiving her letter, have put his case at once into the hands of some acute and respectable lawyer; who would sift it thoroughly, and settle the disagreeable subject in the twinkling of an eye: he felt that it was only by adopting such a course that he could be protected from some infamous conspiracy, destructive perhaps of her peace and his own reputation; but he must confess that he was not exactly in funds to meet the six-and-eight-penny charges that must ensue.

Even the most frugal style of living in London was expensive, and he had almost got to the end of his Charlotte's very liberal supply: of course, he might run up an account; but he would rather pay for each separate consultation; for lawyers' bills were an abomination to him, and amidst all his vagaries he had contrived to escape clear of them. Then Mr. Carew went on to say, that if his lady could, without material inconvenience, supply him with a ten or twenty pound note, &c., &c.: the rest of the letter may be fairly left to the imagination of the reader; seeing that, in the opinion of the writer thereof, the most truly important part of it has thus been given.

The readers of fable are well conversant with the character of Reynard the Fox, and know how often it happens that while he enjoys the repu-

tation of being the slyest of the four-legged creation, the animal often ruins his cleverest schemes by the very excess of that cunning on which he plumes himself. In like manner, Carew, charmed with the expedient which had occurred to him for obtaining a seasonable reinforcement to his finances, wasted on self-applause the moments that had better have been devoted to a cooler consideration of the subject; for as it is certain that he relished with peculiar zest the sort of bachelor-life he was leading in London, one can hardly suppose that he would have done anything advisedly to cut short so pleasant a career, and voluntarily resume the position of "family man:" and yet, by his unlucky mistake of augmenting his wife's anxiety, instead of soothing it to the utmost, and especially by that emphatical mention of legal advice, there cannot be a doubt of his having considerably forwarded that untoward event.

It was Carew's hope and belief that the modest sum he had written for would be remitted, with all that liberality of soul and promptness of action which usually distinguished his respected lady: but it fell out, on the contrary, that Mrs. Carew, having now the lively apprehension of lawyers' fees superadded to her other conjugal anxieties, resolved upon joining her husband immediately; that she might thoroughly investigate his affairs, and superintend in person the outlay, if such were really necessary, of her property. *Her* property, forsooth! Yes, in the season of her supposed widowhood, so she had termed it; but now she could administer no portion of it, except by the courtesy of the extravagant, wilful, reckless being

whose name she bore. From that snug little sum in the bank, to the stray shilling which had lodged in a corner of her pocket, there was nothing belonging to her, or *seeming* to belong to her, which the law of the land would not readily award to him, if he chose to appropriate it.

Mrs. Carew left home the very night after she had received her husband's letter, travelling quite alone; for she feared the curiosity of a servant might endanger that secrecy as to her present difficulties which she was so desirous to preserve inviolate.

There is nothing like a night-journey for concentrating the thoughts. During those weary hours Mrs. Carew never closed her eyes, but sat revolving one wretched idea, and magnifying it into something more appalling than words can express. On arriving in London, she proceeded straight to the coffee-house where she was accustomed to direct letters to her husband, and which was the only address he had given her; and it added not a little to her anxiety, that throughout the day she was unable to obtain any news of him, though she was assisted in her search by an unexpected but apparently zealous coadjutor.

For just as she was questioning a waiter at the tavern, and vainly trying to learn from him the name of the street where Carew lodged, it chanced that Captain Romilly entered the passage in which they were conferring; being bound on much the same errand as herself, viz., to call on the agreeable John; with whose qualities he had been so favourably impressed, as they journeyed together from Horton, that he had subsequently taken some pains to

cultivate his acquaintance, and had even introduced him into the somewhat exclusive society of Lady Sarah Wigram and Miss Drake.

As soon as the waiter perceived this well-known friend of the missing gentleman, he gladly referred Mrs. Carew to him, as the person most likely to afford her information of her husband; and in this way an acquaintance, strangely intimate, considering its sudden formation, was struck up between Charlotte Carew and the enthusiastic Romilly.

It may be fairly predicated, from the chivalric sentiment and gallant bearing of that young officer, that he would, under any circumstances, have lent aid and counsel to a disconsolate lady. Mrs. Carew's jaded and anxious aspect might well place her under this denomination of interesting females; yet, we can scarcely doubt that his assistance was accorded with all the more facility, demanded as it was by the mother of that fair Carew, whose image, so lately renewed in his memory by an actual rencontre, had ever since been refreshed from time to time through the conversation of her father. His natural warmth, therefore, was tempered by the most respectful politeness, as he tendered the little information he had to give, and volunteered to search those quarters of the town which Carew was known to be in the habit of frequenting: for of his actual lodgings he, like the wandering wife, was entirely ignorant.

During the day, however, his inquiries proved fruitless; and although Carew's absence from his customary haunts was afterwards accounted for satisfactorily, yet, happening at a crisis like this, when

every trifle was seized upon by his anxious wife as a confirmation of evil, her suspicions seemed all but established: the lightest supposition that occurred to her was, that her husband was flying the pursuit of justice—the worst, that he was already the inmate of a jail. It was while writhing under the agony of these apprehensions that she had written to Selby.

In the midst of her own presumed degradation, in the unspeakable disgrace of that man for whom, notwithstanding his many failings, she could not help feeling still some affection, Mrs. Carew was yet mindful of the evil influence his conduct must have on the fortunes of her poor girl. There was not an honest family in the kingdom that would not shrink from the infamy of an alliance with the daughter of one who had been tried for bigamy; how, then, would the Luttrels think of it? At least the poor child must be spared the mortification of having her father's shame made matter of common talk while she remained under their roof—it would be enough to kill her. And so, as we have seen, in the most impressive language she could adopt, did Mrs. Carew scare her daughter away from Horton. That very same night, however (her epistle being long beyond recall), a certain modification took place in the writer's feelings.

Captain Romilly, after resorting to every possible place where he might expect to find Carew, and giving up the point at last as hopeless, lighted upon the agreeable John in a spot where he had never thought of looking for him: viz., playing whist with a select party of fashionables in the drawing-room

of Lady Sarah Wigram. Here, though the company were beginning to take leave, the captain thought it advisable to show himself, and account to Miss Drake for his somewhat unusual absence: that lady being very punctilious in exacting her full share of his time and attention; and here, we repeat, he chanced upon Mr. Carew, scoring four by honours and the odd trick, and comporting himself with an easy placidity, which struck his young friend as a singular contrast to the hurried manner and evident disturbance of the wife who was so anxiously seeking him.

A visible surprise, amounting almost to alarm, did certainly pass across his features, when Mrs. Carew's message was whispered in his ear; but the suddenness of the summons might account for this emotion without supposing anything extraordinary to be connected with it. Romilly knew quite enough of the world to be aware that, in the case of a "gentleman upon town," the unexpected arrival of a wife may not always form a subject of sincere congratulation.

Carew received the news with the very exclamation of Othello on his tongue—"My wife? What wife?" but he did not add with the jealous Moor, "I have *no* wife:" probably his confusion might arise from a predicament directly opposed to that of the Governor of Cyprus. It was, however, not without emphasis that he whispered, as he shuffled the cards, "You are sure she's from Bath?"

His friend's careless answer seemed to reassure him; for he presently added a pious hope that no family misfortune had brought her up so suddenly.

“At all events,” whispered Romilly, “your daughter is quite well; for I took care to ascertain *that* particularly.”

Mr. Carew thanked the considerate messenger with a paternal smile, as he inquired if his partner could oblige him with an honour; which query being answered in a polite and cheerful affirmative, from under the wig and yellow turban *vis-à-vis* to him, the rubber at once concluded: and cousin John found himself at liberty to proceed to whichever of his wives might happen to be asking after him.

In the mean while, Mrs. Carew had been working herself so thoroughly into a belief of her husband's terrible condition, that the mere sight of that agreeable person, full-dressed and in all his usual health and activity, went far to persuade her that she had exaggerated the dangers of his case.

What he had to tell, in answer to her numerous and minute inquiries, was in substance little more than what his written communication had contained; but many a particular too trifling to be transmitted by post may possess a certain weight when delivered verbally. A sketchy outline may thus be filled up, by here a bold stroke and there a minuter touch, till it stands out sharply and prominently from the canvass; so that even the eye of a connoisseur rests upon the work with satisfaction. It is a fact that the artist in question was (as we have lately seen) apt to injure his best efforts by imprudent experiments, ventured on the spur of the moment, and a want of that patient finish without which the brightest geniuses have been known to fail: but this did not so often

occur to Carew when he was painting expressly for his wife; for he stood more in awe of her than of any other living soul, and was proportionably circumspect in his dealings with her.

On this occasion he succeeded, even sooner than he had anticipated, in persuading his dear Charlotte that she was alarming herself unnecessarily on the subject of his youthful indiscretions: and there was one point especially on which Carew insisted; and which seemed to coincide so well with her own observations, that she was easily disposed to give him credit. This was the idea that Mrs. Bradshaw, if not actually out of her mind, was, nevertheless, the victim of monomania.

Now we are not prepared to say but that the suggestion did, in fact, originate almost wholly with Mrs. Carew; but, even supposing it did, her husband has all the merit of adopting it so instantly, and dilating upon it so well, that the quick-witted Charlotte herself could never afterwards lay claim to the idea. He thereupon brought many quaint little instances to prove that the woman had never been right in the head; expressing much compunction for the tricks which he and "that rogue Macnamara" had delighted to play off upon her.

"If she did give him a little trouble with her extravagant vagaries," he feelingly said, "he should really regard it as a kind of judgment upon him. He only wished all his juvenile irregularities could be as easily atoned for!"

Carew then turned the discourse to a warm and grateful acknowledgment of the kindness his wife

was shewing him, in relinquishing the comforts of home at a moment's warning, that she might watch over his safety, and assist him with her presence and advice,—“Knowing,” as he said, “how very incompetent her poor old John was, with all his gray hairs, to manage his own affairs discreetly.”

So far, so well. The kind pressure of the hand, and the confiding smile accompanying his words, had brought something very like a tear into the eyes of his wife; when Carew, the very next moment, nearly spoiled his game by urging her on no account to carry her self-denial too far. Charming as her company was to him—much as he should miss it after having had a glimpse of such a blessing, he would not for the world that she remained in town a day longer than was convenient for and agreeable to her.

At this point, a quick and suspicious glance warned John Carew that the ice was shaking beneath him, and if he persisted in trying it too far in this direction, another moment might (metaphorically speaking) see him engulfed: a spectacle for gods and men, and the Humane Society. Retracing his steps, therefore, as softly as he could, he followed her lead with the utmost apparent cheerfulness: saw all the propriety of their getting into private lodgings as soon as possible, and highly congratulated himself on the prospect of being again “a family man.”

With regard to the locality of those lodgings, indeed, Mr. Carew foresaw difficulties which were not so apparent to his lady wife; for he hesitated as to the respectability of various streets which she recommended, and others he pronounced ruinously expen-

sive: "You, who are unused to a London life in the height of the season," he said, "can have no idea of the enormous rents they ask; and the style in which they will fleece you in every imaginable way!" And she, being country-born and bred, and having a wholesome fear of London sharpers, lent an attentive ear to his objections.

Of course, they could look about them and see what might be done; or, if she trusted the matter to him, he would go off alone the next morning lodging-hunting: but upon his word, Carew thought, "he really did begin to think that some genteel suburb would be the thing for them. He knew his Charlotte did not care a fig for coach-hire; and as to himself, so as he could keep her with him, he minded nothing else. He was, thank Heaven! well able to walk in and out of town when his business required it; and then he should be always at her command when she wanted him, and yet near enough to prosecute his endeavours for that situation in the Admiralty Office, for the speedy attainment of which he had such sanguine hopes. It was but the other day he heard of apartments wonderfully neat and reasonable, only a *very* little way over the water; and there was a place called Islington, at once rural and convenient."

As he spoke, Mr. Carew looked at his wife with an air of wistful inquiry; while she received the suggestion as one who had little personal interest in the subject. "For in truth, John," said she, "this horrid business (say what you will, it is horrid) has given my whole nature such a shock, that I doubt if I

shall ever again feel myself respectable, wherever I may be. But then there is Selby, poor girl! I must be particular about her: and should she be with us——”

This was the first notice Carew had received of his daughter's expected arrival in town, and it made a strong impression upon him. He mused a little, whistled slightly, and then walked up and down the room, smiling occasionally to himself, and giving random answers, when addressed. Now and then a half-articulate murmur would escape him, in which the only sound distinguishable would be the word “Drake,” accompanied by a mischievous chuckle. Finally, giving way to the spirits which were so apt to throw him off his guard, he finished an elaborate *pirouette* with a side-long step, which would soon have carried him to the other end of the room, had he not caught a look of annoyance from his wife; which arrested him half-way, and restored him to his senses.

It is observable that from this moment, Carew made no further reference to any of the metropolitan outskirts: not another allusion to Kent Road or Hammersmith; and as for Islington, it disappeared altogether from his map of Middlesex, and became a mere *terra incognita*.

From the dilemma about lodgings, Mrs. Carew was extricated by the same friendly hand that had already been stretched out to help her. Captain Romilly called early the next morning to inquire after the health of his new acquaintance in the Carew family; and finding her and the agreeable John just setting off in quest of rooms—the latter

explaining to him that they should probably require an additional apartment for the accommodation of their daughter, that considerate and obliging young man suddenly recollected a very eligible lodging, kept by a woman who had formerly been in the service of a lady, a friend of his; and consequently he was able to vouch for her perfect respectability.

“By-the-bye,” said he, addressing Carew, “she lived with that handsome Mrs. Hamilton whom you saw at Horton Hall: she was with her in her campaigning tour. And an excellent little person Kitty Simmons was, with a passion for the army which I fancied would have kept her following the camp to the end of the chapter; when, lo! to my infinite surprise, I met her the other day, and she told me she was settled in London, married—not to a bold dragoon, as the Fates seemed to signify, but to a peaceable post-office clerk, or some such anomalous thing, and keeping a lodging-house in Maddox-street. I really would advise you to look at her rooms, before you go further.”

The advice was followed immediately, and met with the fullest success: Mrs. Dawes, née Simmons, proved as civil as the captain had described her; her rooms, though small, were convenient; and happening to be vacant, the Carews were able to enter into immediate possession.

Here, then, surrounded by the shabby-genteel furniture and tasteless embellishments of a third-rate London lodging-house, Selby found her parents.

Her mother would rather have received her alone; and the sight of her father, acceptable though it

might be, was at least a matter of surprise to his child: for she had fully reckoned on his being the cause of their present mysterious embarrassment, and when she encountered him looking and talking so cheerfully, and seeming so extremely glad to see her, her anxiety took another turn—the filial gave place to the conjugal, and she lingered in the embrace of her mother, that she might ask, though in the lowest possible voice,—“For Heaven’s sake! is anything the matter with Hartley?”

Mrs. Carew reassured her, in a hurried but energetic whisper,—“No, no: all is right in that quarter; and I’ll tell you everything as soon as we are alone.”

Well as she seemed to know her husband’s character, Charlotte Carew really believed he would leave the relation of his embarrassment to be supplied by her; who, in tenderness to her daughter’s feelings as well as his, would do her best to gloss over, or to extenuate, the grosser parts of the narrative; telling the truth that must be told, as decently as she was able.

But this was a pitch of refinement to which Carew himself never dreamed of aspiring: in fact, professing to regard the whole story as an excellent joke, he would have thought his daughter ill-used, had he denied her a full participation of what must be so amusing to a lover of the facetious and the queer. In defiance, therefore, of his wife’s evident disgust and annoyance, he talked on in his usual reckless style; and it was not long before Selby was in full possession of the leading facts relating to the episode of the Red Lion of Portsmouth.

Then a new light broke upon her : she thought of the strange visitor that morning at the hall—the person who had claimed the name of Carew, and given her nerves so severe a shock ; and she inquired with animation as to the appearance of this Mrs. Bradshaw. “ Did she look very much like a macaw ? Had she a green pelisse, and a red riband in her bonnet ? ”

She was answered that such was indeed the travelling costume of her of the *Lion Rouge* ; though Mrs. Carew marvelled how her daughter could have become acquainted with it. But her wonder merged into the deepest mortification, upon learning how and where the meeting had taken place ; and a most expressive look was directed to her husband, plainly saying—“ See to what your folly and vices have reduced us : making us contemptible in the sight of your relations—objects of scorn and derision to those Luttrels ! ”

Carew himself was a little moved at the incident : he looked blank for a moment or two, and wondered what the deuce could have sent the old beldame to Horton of all places ; though he soon began to laugh at the absurdity of the adventure, and the surprise it must have occasioned. “ But with all their particularity,” he observed, “ they were good creatures on the whole, and would never be too hard upon him : he should soon set the matter to rights with them. Now, if the old woman found her way to Grosvenor Square, there indeed she might spoil sport : another Mrs. Carew in that quarter !—ha ! ha ! At all events, she might interfere with my conversion : for I believe I have not mentioned to you, my love, that I go twice a

week to have an hour's talk with Lord Elderton; and he is converting me so fast, that I only wonder by this time you can distinguish your own old John from any of the saints in Lady Huntingdon's chapel."

The rejoinder was mournful enough.

"Would to Heaven, Carew! that he or any one else could bring you to a more proper way of thinking!" And his reply showed a touch of the better feeling which he was occasionally seen to display in reference to his wife.

"Charlotte," said he, "if you, with your unaffected piety and real worth, have never been able to make a man and a rational creature of me, depend upon it, it is not that old shrivelled valetudinarian, with his self-satisfied humility, that will do the job: not but what I mean to profit, in some way or other, by his lordship's exertions; though not perhaps just as he or Lady Huntingdon might expect."

Carew then turned off to his usual free-and-easy talk; giving, in the shortest possible space of time, his opinion on various subjects more or less interesting to his companions.

In this way he might succeed in sustaining his own spirits, but could do little towards raising theirs. Oppressed with anxieties he was not to reciprocate, his wife and daughter exchanged looks; and the point to which Selby's fears immediately turned, was easily traced in her earnest question as to whether this disgraceful story was likely to get into the newspapers, and be read everywhere and by everybody. "Was such a thing possible?"

Well could her mother interpret the look with

which this was said : and she, too, winced and shuddered in spirit ; for it was in moments like these that the sin conceived at Quin's Folly, and perfected at St. Margaret Moses, met something like its adequate reward.

Carew's presence checked the immediate out-pouring of the heart that would certainly then have taken place ; and when his ladies were at liberty to speak, the time for such open communication had passed away : for again they experienced the inevitable estrangement which arose from their mutual matrimonial embarrassments.

The period was long over when Selby dared to speak frankly of Luttrell ; and now, with relation to this new dilemma—this painful apprehension that the Portsmouth affair might reach his knowledge, and throw discredit on his connection with her—how could either of them open their hearts as parent and child should do, when the hero of the scandalous story was husband to the one, and father to the other ! Then, as to the one great grief that lay so very near her heart, would not Selby almost as soon have jumped out of Mrs. Dawes's window as have entrusted the name of Hamilton to the maternal ear ? In fact, painfully conscious as she was of her mother's inveterate prejudice against the Luttrells, she found it the most difficult thing in the world to enlarge upon her visit to Horton. Not that Mrs. Carew fell into open censure of any of the family ; but there was such a reluctant expression in her face : such a cold suspicious sort of look, as effectually damped the ardour with which Selby, in her

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strong attachment to them—her love for some, and respect for all, would fain have praised her husband's relations.

So they soon fell back on matters of less excitement—on Bath news, of which Mrs. Carew had, of course, something to tell; or else a safe theme presented itself in the dear old Wollastons: one on which they might both be explicit. They could speak too of Captain Romilly, who was now become a mutual acquaintance. Selby was always gratified to hear of one established in her favour as a friend of Hartley's; and she was glad to perceive how favourable an impression he had made on her mother, and how useful his friendly attentions, in procuring them such nice lodgings, had proved to the Carew family in general. So they sang his praises in the self-same key, and expressed some natural curiosity to know what sort of person Miss Drake might be.

“Your father can satisfy us on that point,” Mrs. Carew observed; “for I rather think he has been introduced to her: but really, Selby, I have been so engrossed lately with matters purely personal, that I have had no thought to bestow on those of other people. Perhaps, after all, I might have spared you this journey: but it can't be helped now; and I own it is a comfort to me, under all circumstances, to have you with me. So, being here, we must make the best of it, and pass the time as pleasantly as we can. Your second visit to London, my poor darling, will, I trust, be less eventful and far happier than your first.”

The words were cheerful in their tendency, yet Mrs. Carew smothered a sigh as she uttered them;

whilst her daughter had to check an inward shudder, ere she could command her voice in reply.

A night's rest and the dawning of a new day, and that a very fine one, brought a more unconstrained cheerfulness into the faces of Carew's two ladies. All vain and ineffectual was the intervening drapery round Mrs. Dawes's first-floor windows, to exclude the sunbeams of that bright June morning. They penetrated without an effort the muslin blinds, and dallied with the red and yellow tulips of her chintz curtains, as though they had been the veritable flowers they did, in fact, basely represent. That epithet, by the way—that scornful adverb—would not have escaped me, had there been the remotest chance of its ever reaching the eyes and grieving the heart of Mrs. Dawes herself; for those hangings were the special delight of the good-natured little woman.

“So chaste, and yet so natty!” it was thus that she expressed herself, settling the scanty folds, and then gazing fondly at them. “I don't say but what there might have been more expensive things at Todd and Davison's, but I will say that a genteeler pattern was not to be met with in their whole establishment: and a real lady like you, Miss Carew, will agree with me that gentility is everything.”

Then, diverging from particularities, Mrs. Dawes goes on to extol the general aspect and situation of her lodgings: fashion and convenience vying, as it were, to render them of twice the value she puts upon them. The —— mews within a stone's throw, for the convenience of her distinguished lodgers;

while for such as were not lucky enough to need this advantage, there was a coach-stand just round the corner. And then they were so near to the Opera, and all the theatres; and close to St. George's, Hanover Square! Mrs. Dawes must say she prided herself a great deal upon that circumstance: it was *so* handy for wedding parties. They could hear the bells as plain as possible: didn't Miss Carew like to hear them? She must say herself she did rejoice in a merry peal; considering the happy occasions they were celebrating, and honouring 'the state' as she had every reason to do.

"And really, ladies, when I see so many nice young couples, morning after morning, driving up to that sacred altar in their handsome carriages, all in their silks and satins, and blue coats and beautiful lace veils—so thin they are! Oh! as fine as cobwebs. You may smile at me if you like, but it's my belief, that if anybody can witness such happy, genteel doings as these without feeling moved by the spectacle, their hearts must be made of sticks, or stocks, or stones; or, what is a worse thing still, they must be old maids and bachelors. No," correcting herself gravely, "I won't say old maids, for that would be illiberal; knowing, as we do, that there is not one of that unfortunate class who would not have got a husband if she could: *they* must wait to be asked the question, and some of them wait to no purpose; so that they have every excuse for their condition, poor old creatures! but it's quite another thing with the other sex. And oh, dear me, ma'am,

I do think if there is an altogether despicable thing on the face of the earth, it is an old bachelor: it would go to my very heart to let my nice rooms to any one of them: always, of course, excepting Mr. Mauleverer; and some people, I dare say, would scruple to call him an old bachelor, on account of his wearing so well: but you see, ladies, I have had a peep into their family Bible."

Selby, whose interest was suddenly awakened, here broke in—she had not yet been made acquainted with Mrs. Dawes's former connection with the Hamiltons, and her ear caught the name of Mauleverer with infinite surprise—"Whose name is that? Who is that gentleman, Mrs. Dawes?"

But Mrs. Dawes, intent on a favourite theme, was not easily to be interrupted. She was now congratulating Miss Carew on the unlikelihood—nay, the utter impossibility—of her ever joining that desolate portion of womankind upon whom the good woman lavished at once her sympathy and contempt; and by an easy flow of thought and language, which could hardly be called a transition from the main subject, she pledged herself, "in the case that it should be her fortunate lot to have a wedding party set off from her establishment, to omit nothing in the world to make them comfortable."

Then followed some mention of a wedding that had taken place but the previous morning, at the rival lodging-house "just over the way:" only worthy of notice, however, as it served to illustrate the present topic; for Mrs. Dawes more than insinuated that it was no great things after all. Wealthy people too,

she understood: at least Mrs. Wilkinson said so; but she was for ever boasting of her grand lodgers. For her own part, Mrs. Dawes must say she had no notion of rich people going about things in such a mean sort of fashion. Mrs. Wilkinson put the best face she could upon the matter, and talked about "quiet gentility;" but Mrs. Dawes knew, quite as well as Mrs. Wilkinson, the meaning of that word, and she pronounced it a niggardly proceeding.

"Though I don't deny it might have been worse; for I declare, ladies, I have seen things of that interesting nature so hushed up and huddled over, that it was disgraceful to all parties: the bridegroom as was to be coming slinking about as if he was afraid to be seen, and the bride looking as though she was ashamed to present him to her friends. Oh! I call such nasty shuffling doings quite a detriment to the holy state. It's all very well, that there should be a little modesty over and above on the female side; but I have always said it, and always will, that the man that could look sheepish and out of sorts on his wedding-day should never have been husband of mine: and as for conducting joyful occasions in such a mousey hum-drum way, it looks to me as if there must be something to be concealed; and I do so detest anything like a clandestine arrangement! Don't you, Miss Carew?"

But the young lady thus pointedly addressed returned no answer; and though her mama subscribed to the justice and delicacy of Mrs. Dawes's sentiments, she did it in so very dry and short a

manner, that the little hostess took the hint forthwith, and curtsied herself out of the room.

“How that woman talks!” said Mrs. Carew. “Be careful, Selby, never to encourage her; for if she once gets into our rooms on any pretence, we shall find it difficult to send her out again. I am sure that Mrs. M'Donald showed a strange taste in her choice of a companion to keep such a chatterer about her person so many years: but (not to be personal, Selby) I fear we must not look for much taste or refinement amongst the generality of officers' wives. Oh, didn't I tell you Mrs. Dawes's history? She was lady's-maid to the wife of some officer in Captain Romilly's regiment.”

“Are you sure it was M'Donald?” inquired her daughter.

“Y-e-s, M'Donald, o-r M'Kenzie, o-r M'Pherson, or something like that: it was certainly Scotch.”

And then Mrs. Carew, attracted by the sight of certain millinery in a shop across the street, fell into an argumentative train of reasoning, on the palpable propriety (seeing that they were suddenly transported into the very centre of fashion) of supplying themselves with one specimen at least of the newest description of bonnet.

“Not that I intend giving way to any extravagance,” said she. “In the present uncertainty of your father's affairs, I shall think it only prudent to avoid every unnecessary expense: but the case is different with you; and as long as there is the slightest probability of your falling in with any of the Luttrels, it behoves you to be scrupulous in your

dress and appearance. Has not Mrs. Dawes just reminded us," added Mrs. Carew, archly, smiling on her contemplative child, "that gentility is everything in this world? And with regard to those new hats that I observed they are wearing here, it strikes me they will be exceedingly becoming to you. I noticed one of them just before I left Bath, and could not help fancying I saw your dear face in it, as it hung in Mrs. Rigby's window. The Tilney Long they call that shape: named after the great heiress, you know."

"Are you sure, mama, it wasn't Hamilton?" inquired Selby, her thoughts running on quite another subject. "I do believe it is Hamilton."

"No, my love, Tilney Long."

"No, no, mama, I don't mean that."

"But I saw it myself—Tilney Long."

"No, no."

"Oh, I see now, you are alluding to Mrs. Dawes's old mistress. Yes, on my word I believe it might be Hamilton. I daresay the name is familiar enough to you, Selby: no doubt, as she was out some time with the regiment, Hartley has often mentioned her in his letters."

Miss Carew knitted her brows, and took a very long breath. "She wished she had known all this before: she should so like to talk to Mrs. Dawes about her travels. For you know, mama, her adventures may be rather curious."

"To you I daresay they may, my love; and so as you keep her out of my way, I care not how long her stories may be: but I charge

you utter not the word Hamilton to her in my hearing."

"You may make yourself quite easy on that score," was the answer: and in fact so scrupulously attentive was Selby to her mother's directions in this particular, that although during her stay in Maddox-street she had many a little confidential talk with her landlady, such conferences were always strictly private. At one time they would encounter on the staircase, at another linger a few minutes on the landing: nay, the lovely Carew, so far from participating in her mother's horror of Mrs. Dawes's gossip, would condescend even to sit down now and then in her hostess's own dominion, the little back parlour below, for the sake of hearing regimental anecdotes. "She did so like to draw out that good little Dawes."

And from these interviews our heroine would return in various moods of mind—thoughtful, dissatisfied, pensive, or a little peevish: sometimes with the tear in her eye, and the wandering glance of one whose tenderest thoughts had been forcibly excited; whilst at others it would be all sheer disappointment and annoyance; for "that tiresome little woman would talk of nothing but herself or her husband, or rake up some old story about a flirtation with Sergeant Huggins or the Drum-Major of our regiment."

There was one feature in her London life which Selby had not anticipated, but which caused her unmixed satisfaction. This was an almost daily intercourse which shortly took place between herself and Hartley's much loved uncle: for Mr. Francis lost no

time in prosecuting that journey to town, which we left him proposing to himself and his family at the end of our second volume; so imperative a duty did he pronounce it to investigate personally the mysterious affairs of his cousin Carew. Esther Luttrell, who, as we have seen, imputed a very different motive to her father's actions, watched his departure with the gloomiest presentiment of coming evil. It was her opinion that Curtins might have leaped into the gulf at a harder trot, and with an air of grander defiance; but that his case was scarcely more desperate than that of Mr. Francis, as he smiled his adieux at the Lodge-gate, and scattered his benedictions on the two little conceited heads that were waiting there for the paternal blessing."

"Good-bye, dearest papa," said the little girl, "and come back soon, for we shall miss you so very, very much. And do not forget, if you please, those beautiful chronological maps that you were so good as to promise us; and the catechism of conchology."

"And good-bye to you, papa," was Master Harold's parting address; "by the time you come home again I have no doubt but I shall have found out the longitude; for I was very near it this morning while my hair was being brushed, and I mean to study the subject for twenty minutes every day till you come back."

This sanguine expectation excited some timely amusement, amidst which the carriage drove away. Then Miss Luttrell, taking the arm of her old friend, they sauntered into the garden together; the serious nature of their discourse being apparent in the sub-

dued tones, the occasional pause, and a certain shaking of the head to and fro. In the case of the elder lady, that pendulous motion might be construed as a cheering signal—a jerk of encouragement, rather than despondency ; but on the side of poor Esther, every slight yet unmistakeable gesture displayed the heaviness of her misgivings.

“ I used to wonder,” said she, “ when people talked of a theatre being a picture of actual life ; for however clever and truthful the acting on the stage might be, there was also something in the composure and immobility with which the audience sat and surveyed it, that destroyed, to my mind, every illusion of reality. And yet, Mrs. Grey, what are we doing now, but playing audience to a drama of intrigue and folly ? Here we are, scene after scene unfolding and passing away before our eyes, while we look on unable to influence one single piece of the machinery ; and not even allowed the poor privilege of hissing the actors at our pleasure.”

“ Why, considering that your own father is the hero of the piece, Esther, that might not be altogether decent. But, uneasy as you are, my dear, why not pluck up a spirit and follow on the traces of these good people ? I would, indeed, Esther : if I were you, and worried myself as you do, I would go after them at once, and make my own observations. You know your uncle is always glad to see you ; and remember the old proverb about a stitch in time.”

“ As to my interfering in any direct way, that would be sure to do mischief, and accelerate what I

dread; and I am no manoeuvrer. I suppose I want that respect for my fellow-creatures which gives one patience to humour and manage them. I was half inclined, though, to ask Mr. Pickering to write to me. From him I know I should have heard everything that was going on."

"That you would, chapter and verse: la! my dear, why didn't you?"

"Why, you know, Mrs. Grey, I have never made the weaknesses of my father a subject of discussion with anybody but you: and after all, I doubt if the reverend Thomas would be the discreetest confident in the world."

How far Miss Luttrell might have been talked over by her less scrupulous companion to take Mr. Pickering into her confidence, remains uncertain; for ere she could make up her mind upon this point, she found her father writing home in a style so full and frank, and with evidently so little desire of concealing his course of life in London, that it would have been a work of supererogation as well as indelicacy to have employed a spy upon his actions.

On the immediate, at least the ostensible cause of his visit to the metropolis, he touched, indeed, with a brevity that extorted some rather severe remarks from Mrs. Damer; for the ladies at the Hall, ever interested in the concerns of their agreeable cousin, had been naturally looking to Mr. Francis for a full elucidation of the Bradshaw mystery. But though it was clear he had seen Carew, and of course heard his explanation of it, yet he condescended to no particulars; no feeling was there for the state of

wonder and curiosity in which he knew he had left the residents of Horton : he merely characterized it as a foolish business, the consequences of which, if likely to cause annoyance, he hoped to be able to avert.

The slur upon the respectability of himself and family, which must ensue in the event of a relation being prosecuted for bigamy, seemed either overlooked altogether, or merged into an extreme sympathy for the female members of Mr. Carew's household. Mr. Francis was doing all in his power, he assured his daughter, to allay the apprehensions (so natural under the circumstances) of those "poor things!" In Mrs. Carew's presence, indeed, he had glanced but slightly on a subject so delicate; but their "sweet Selby, with that candour so engaging in her sex and youth, had already confided her filial anxiety to his friendly ear."

There followed a more particular notice of cousin John's wife; and it need not be doubted that the description of that lady now presented to Horton and its environs, bore but a very faint likeness to the overbearing virago they had been used to suppose her.

A more perfect gentlewoman Mr. Francis professed to have seldom seen; and if there was a little more stiffness and reserve in her manner towards him than he could wish displayed, it was not to be wondered at, considering the unpleasant light in which they had regarded each other for a period of so many years: he trusted, however, this estrangement would wear off upon further acquaintance.

"I have not a doubt of it," said Esther, commenting on the letter as she read it to Mrs. Grey:

“she will condescend to be amiable enough when she finds he means to marry her daughter.”

“But,” continued the letter, “they should have Mrs. Carew’s character from Captain Romilly; who had also found his way to Maddox-street, and was really almost as enthusiastic in his praise of the mother as the daughter: in fact, between ourselves, my dear Esther, he seems so very much inclined to loiter away his time in their society, that Miss Drake could scarcely fail to feel annoyed if it reached her knowledge.”

“Yes!” exclaimed Miss Luttrell, striking the letter with a gesture of disgust; “and this simple-minded girl—this sample of female excellence—no doubt encourages his attentions to the utmost of her power! In the midst of her designs upon my father, she can find time to amuse herself with poor Romilly.”

“I think,” Mr. Francis proceeded, “that if his conduct seemed really verging on imprudence, I should recommend my brother interfering with our ardent friend; the young man respects him highly, and would bear advice and even reproof from him better than from any one else: besides, as trustee to Sophia, his interference in what so immediately concerns her happiness, could not seem improper. I should be loth to do this at present, however, as your uncle is evidently far from well; and things that would formerly have made little impression on him, now agitate him painfully. In some respects I wish your aunt were here: in fact, I was on the point of giving her such a sketch of matters in Great George-street as I knew would have brought her up instantly; but Picker-

ing—who, with all his good intentions, is apt to be a little officious—thought proper to broach the matter to Mr. Luttrell himself; and the consequence was, so decided a veto being put upon the scheme, that it becomes almost impossible now to execute it, without irritating him to a dangerous degree. From the tenor of the letter I received from you this morning, I perceive, my dear Esther, you are expecting me home by the end of this week; but with your uncle in the state I have described, I should not hold myself justified in hastening my departure from town.”

“Probably,” said Mrs. Grey, drily, “he will remain in London till Harold has discovered the longitude.”

Miss Luttrell smiled, in spite of herself, but went on reading:—“I feel it a duty quite incumbent on me to be at hand here; either to summon Isabella, if need be, or enforce the necessity of medical advice: to which as yet he has obstinately refused to have recourse, though it is plain that his whole system is disordered. How rejoiced I should be to have the responsibility taken off my hands by the arrival of Hartley; whose persuasions would, of course, have much more weight with his father than mine. From the length of time which has occurred without our hearing from him, I cannot help indulging a hope that his next letter may be dated ‘Portsmouth;’ in that case, you must all come up to Westminster forthwith. And now, my dear child, though I have not thought it right to conceal from you the somewhat melancholy state of affairs in George-street, I must not have you regard me as altogether a sacri-

fice to fraternal duty; as my personal attentions appear rather to annoy than soothe your uncle. I abstain from forcing them upon him; and in the mean while am leading, I assure you, rather a gay life amongst our London acquaintance: of some of whom I will tell you more at large in my next."

"There!" remarked Mrs. Grey, "you see he does not confine himself to Maddox-street."

"Ah! but hear what follows:—'The Howards are still here awaiting the end of the session, and also the Eveshams. I wish I could say that those girls were in any respect improved by a London season; but they, as well as the Howards, grow intolerably coarse, and are acquiring to my mind a bold conventional tone, which militates against all my ideas of feminine grace. You will tell me, perhaps, that my visits to Maddox-street,—'There, Mrs. Grey!'—my visits to Maddox-street are not calculated to render me more indulgent to the imperfections of your sex. Well, be it so. I flatter myself that if my fastidiousness may be impugned, my taste, by all good judges, will be held indisputable. But I must put an end to this long despatch; and so my dear Esther, with remembrances to Mrs. Grey (whose commission about that odd volume of Santo Sebastiano, Mr. Pickering promises to attend to), I will for the present say adieu.'"

"And nothing about Mr. Fothergill and Fanny?" asked Mrs. Grey.

"Yes; a word or two in the postscript.—'I have scarcely seen our old friend over the way, our hours being so very different; but Pickering, who knows

more of his proceedings than I do, reports that he and his young charge are already heartily tired of each other: she longing for more gaiety than he is disposed to give her, and he in constant alarm of her giddy propensities. Not a word do they hear of Mrs. Marsham, and he and Fanny are both highly disconcerted that she has had, as yet, no invitation to remove to Curzon-street: a relief to both of them, upon which they had calculated, as it now seems, rather too confidently."

As Mr. Francis Luttrell, whose amiable nature cannot be praised too highly, intended this epistle of his to form an agreeable addition to the breakfast-table at Horton Lodge, it was well for him that he did not overhear the observation with which his daughter finished its perusal.

"It is a good thing for the revenue, no doubt; but I am often inclined to think that, on the whole, we should go on much more comfortably, if there were no such thing in the world as letter-writing."

Unsatisfactory, however, as her father's correspondence might be to Miss Luttrell, it may serve to give the reader a tolerable insight into the general course of events, in those two or three London houses in which our story takes an interest. There was gloom and discontent hovering over certain mansions in the neighbourhood of the Abbey; a smooth surface, though perhaps a deceitful one, still existing at No. — Curzon-street, May Fair; whilst in the very humblest of all the habitations wherewith we undertake to meddle, viz., that obscure little lodging-house in Maddox-street, there was displayed an

aspect of good-humour and cheerfulness, which (considering the secret troubles of two, at least, of its inmates) speaks well for their unselfishness: or for their elasticity of mind. We would indeed fain flatter ourselves that goodness unalloyed, and all the cardinal virtues were at the bottom of this seeming tranquillity: this smiling serenity, which rendered those two sweet women so fascinating to the very few visitors having the *entrée* at No. 31; and yet we cannot help suspecting that sheer insensibility on one side, and a very strong spice of human pride on the other, contributed somewhat to maintain the cheerful demeanour of the Carews. We know well that, provided the agreeable John was quite at ease in his own precious person, he could always contrive to keep up his spirits, whatever might be the feelings of the friends around him; and as for Charlotte Carew, in spite of her real misgivings about the Bradshaw mystery, she had been so sorely piqued at Selby's excessive discomposure anent that matter, that she had resolved from that moment to consult her own dignity by maintaining that of her husband.

Mrs. Carew began to think that she had grievously erred in lending the smallest semblance of credit to what must throw indelible disgrace on the man she had condescended to restore, from his mysterious wanderings, to her home and affections; and therefore, although she thought proper to take the hint Carew had given her, and seek legal advice as to the embarrassments of his position, she took care that these visits to her lawyer should be strictly private; and studiously

excluded her daughter from any further participation in a topic so grating to her own haughty spirit.

All this might tend to throw a calm and contented aspect over their little circle; and Selby was spared the mortification that must have ensued upon the canvassing so disagreeable a subject: yet, on the other hand, all this silence and mystery convinced her more forcibly than ever of the fatal estrangement that in all questions of importance had grown up between her and her mother; and her heart, chilled by such a want of confidence in the being who had once been all frankness and affection, turned with increasing fondness to her tender and confiding mother-in-law:—how she longed to see her again; to hear her sweet voice, and press the hand that was always so ready to greet her!

Mr. Francis held forth a hope that circumstances might oblige Mrs. Luttrell to come to town before the departure of the Carews. If Captain Luttrell arrived, there would not, he assured her, be a doubt of it; and then, in a confidential way, uncle Francis informed his fair cousin, that, although they abstained from the subject in Isabella's presence, for fear of exciting hopes that might prove futile, yet the fact was, they had every reason to presume that the young man in whom they all took so much interest was now actually on his way home. Even those friends who were most solicitous for his military character, thought he might have reasonably applied for a short leave of absence some time ago; and now that the troops were lying inactive within the lines of Torres Vedras, there could not be

a period more favourable for making such an application.

“Yes; he really hoped to be able to introduce his nephew to their notice before they left London: no doubt, Captain Luttrell would find his way to Maddox-street without his intervention; but,” Mr. Francis added, in his most courteous and courtly manner, he should have peculiar pleasure in originating, in his own person, an acquaintance which he was confident would give mutual pleasure: at all events which must confer on him the lasting gratitude of ‘our dear Hartley.’”

The ladies grew uncommonly red during this little speech, and would not have looked at each other for all the world; and Selby would have been still more embarrassed had she given much credit to the old gentleman’s anticipations: but her last letter from the seat of war gave not the smallest intimation of the writer’s immediate return. And surely—surely if such were his purpose, he would not, could not, suffer her to be the last to hear of it! His love might have chilled; she feared it had: absence and the superior charms of another, and a hundred things beside, unknown to her, might have succeeded in extinguishing it; but that he should show himself deficient in common feeling and courtesy was not to be credited.

On the other hand, his last communication was of an old date; and certainly it was possible that, in the mean time, he had formed the resolution imputed to him by his uncle. In that case, Selby gravely revolved the question whether it would be better for her to await his arrival in London, or, by

returning to her mother's house at Bathwick, leave it to Hartley to take the first step towards their reunion. The latter alternative might seem cold, and give him a right to retaliate on her the change of sentiment she so sadly suspected him of having undergone; but then, again, were he to find her when and where he least expected—laying claim to him as it were; haunting him; presuming (for so he might regard it) on the fatal ceremony that had passed between them at an age when youth and inexperience were their only excuse—such seeming pertinacity might annoy and perhaps disgust him. What should she do?

And Selby, in the solitude of her incommunicable misgivings, would change a hundred times in an hour, and wish—how fervently wish!—that she had a wise and tender counsellor in her mother, whom she might take into her confidence, and to whose advice she might implicitly defer. But this was a blessing past praying for; and so, with a touch of her father's philosophy (it is useful to the best and wisest of us sometimes), she concluded that things must take their own way for the present: and at all events she must not make other people uncomfortable by outwardly seeming the doubting, fearing, meditative creature she really was.

CHAPTER II.

“AND do you really think now, that this Captain Romilly cares much about the lady he is going to marry?” asked Mrs. Carew one morning, as the trio at Mrs. Dawes’s were taking an early luncheon previous to walking out.

“My dear mama, why should you doubt it?” exclaimed Selby, quite horror-struck at the question. “I have always heard Miss Drake spoken of so very highly: and you, sir, think her a nice person, don’t you?”

“Very nice, indeed, my love,” said Carew; “and would be still nicer if she occasionally washed her face.”

“Well, but seriously——”

“I am serious, I assure you: judging by appearances—and what else can mortal man judge from in this world of outside show?—I am morally certain that that ceremony is altogether omitted at Curzon-street; or takes place at very long intervals. Now, our friend the captain (a little wine, my dear Charlotte? I must have you take half a glass), he is, of course, not the man to care for beauty: any one can

see," looking straight at his daughter, "that he values nothing but sterling merit and intrinsic worth, and all that sort of thing. Still, I am inclined to think that, if the captain has a weakness, it is on the subject of skin and complexion; consequently——"

"Now, Carew, do give us a plain answer to our question."

"My love, how is it possible to speak plainer? Our friend, I repeat it, is most liberal in his tastes: that old song of Sheridan's would express his sentiments to a T—'Here's to the maiden of blushing fifteen, here's to the widow of fifty.' Not that a lady of the latter age might altogether suit him; but Romilly is much too gallant to specify particulars: the fair, the sallow, the florid, and the pale, he has a laudable tenderness for all in their turn—but there is a sort of skin he objects to positively, and that is the whity-brown!"

"You don't mean that he has chosen a wife of *that* complexion!" exclaimed Selby, with a solemnity of manner which, considering the subject that called it forth, could only be excusable in a very pretty woman.

"No, my sweet Selby," said her father, "his uncle chose her for him—that crusty old colonel you have heard spoken of. Our friend has not been the most prudent person in the world, and had contracted debts that might have doomed him to the King's Bench for the rest of his days, if he had not turned to and done what was required of him. So old Wid-drington promises to fork out for marriage settlements, and his dutiful nephew courts the lady he

picks out for him. I wonder I never told you the story before."

"It is a sad one," said his daughter, mournfully. "Poor fellow! I hardly know whether to blame or pity him most: and as for her, poor thing!——" anything like moralizing was distasteful to John Carew, so he reverted immediately to Miss Drake's complexion.

"Yes, whity-brown, my love; that is the description, I assure you: 'Sophy's style,' as Lady Sarah calls it; and it is a style (excuse the pun) that the captain finds it difficult to get over. Guessing his prejudices, I have gone so far as to recommend a strong lather of brown Windsor in his lady's case. But the matter was too serious for jesting: he began to grow savage upon it; though really I specified only for thorough ablution once a week: nothing could be more moderate—Saturday nights, eh? That's the canonical time, I believe, for all such little domestic arrangements. But, hark! Don't I hear his voice on the stairs? The very man, as I live! My dear Romilly, we were just talking of you; weren't we, Selby?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the young man, as he entered, with heightened colour and conscious glance: how different from his usual indifferent deportment at Curzon-street. "Don't tell me I have been the subject of your discourse over the luncheon-tray. I care not how I may be spoken of in a crowd, but to be talked over in a snug family party like this; the idea is really too awful!"

The "pity" must have predominated over the

“blame,” or Selby could not have smiled so bewitchingly on Hartley’s friend; as she said,—“Surely Captain Romilly cannot dread *our* judgment of him.”

“Pooh, pooh!” was Carew’s remark, “he is only fishing for compliments.”

“I would willingly claim indulgence here on the score of old—very old acquaintanceship,” said Romilly, as he took the seat Carew offered him; “but though my years are not many, I have seen enough of the world to know that the severest things said (out of Parliament), are those that are uttered in a family party.”

“Oh, Captain Romilly!”

“Yes; and the more amiable the members of that little circle may be, so much the worse for the unlucky fellow they are criticising. He had far better stand the banter of the club or the mess-table; for there unanimity is *not* the order of the day, and he is pretty safe to find some poor devil like himself to take his part.”

“Well; and why not elsewhere? Why not here?”

“No, no, it’s quite another thing. Your good little families are *so* united: all nourished in the same doctrine, feeling with one heart, thinking with one mind. Where, amidst such impeccability, is the absent sinner to find a champion?” and Romilly’s eyes, unintentionally perhaps, appealed with their half-conscious look to the youngest and fairest of the company. It was as if he had been actually listening to their previous talk.

“Hallo, my friend!” cried Carew, in his hearty, cheerful voice. “How’s this? Why, you are all

in the didactics and the dismals to-day. Come out, I suppose, with the left leg foremost; or ran your head against a post or a pump, while meditating on the perfections of your lady-love. Or, perhaps—who knows?—the fair Drake herself may have been cross this morning: even the most charming of their sex will show their teeth sometimes.”

Romilly looked very much disposed to show *his*, as he heard this allusion to the lady—not of his own, but his uncle’s choice; and muttering some unintelligible reply, evaded the subject by addressing himself particularly to Mrs. Carew; who seemed to him the very model of middle-aged (not mediæval) excellence: he had thought well of her when she first appeared before him, travel-stained and care-worn; but now, in person, dress, and deportment, she was altogether unexceptionable. “But in fact,” as he said to himself, “how redolent of grace, beauty, and intelligence, was everything and everybody connected with that charming Selby Carew! and how different! Ah, well, it was of no use to draw idle comparisons now!” And here we find another acquaintance of ours quoting, in the spirit if not the very words of John Carew and Corporal Nym—“things must be as they may:” and on this principle Captain Romilly carefully closed the eyes of his understanding to all that had been and was to be; and suffered himself to sit absorbed in the luxury of the present hour, and the halo of happiness which seemed to his ever ardent fancy to be diffused around that shabby-genteel drawing-room.

In so small a company, the discourse must for the

most part be of a general character; still he found occasional opportunities of referring to topics more particularly interesting to himself. He talked with Selby about Horton and its environs—Myrtle Cottage inclusive; and at last fell back upon the old story of — fair and the mad bull, under pretence of ascertaining (though he was, in truth, persuaded of the fact) that the Carews were really present on that occasion. Great was the surprise of the ladies—a surprise not wholly unmixed with alarm, at hearing this allusion to a place and period so painfully interesting to them both: with glowing faces and the exchange of one uncomfortable look, they wondered at the memory that could retain so trifling an incident, and faces seen so very long ago; while Romilly disclaimed all that was remarkable in the case: it would be strange, indeed, if he had forgotten what made so deep an impression on him.

His open and unconstrained manner of treating the subject soon set them more at ease, as it convinced them the young man had no suspicion of any other of their Devonshire adventures. But still the fair Carew gave him no encouragement to talk of it: it was a period in her existence that she would rather decline enlarging on, even in the smallest and choicest society. Luckily for the young enthusiast, Mrs. Carew, having recovered her serenity, was less averse to the subject which so delighted him. She humoured him by recalling the part she had taken in the rustic adventure; and, especially when brought back to her by Romilly's minute and vivid description, recalled it perfectly. "How frightened

Selby and she had been ! How fast they had run and got over the stile, into the next field : the fright and fatigue had laid her up for three days afterwards." She agreed with him it was all as though it had happened yesterday ; and yet, till reminded of it, she had scarcely thought of the incident from that time till the present. Happy man ! Thrice fortunate Romilly ! who, when unable to stir the sympathies of the daughter, found them still warm and flowing in the mother's heart !

Time flew on, and notwithstanding the ladies had hinted about a shopping expedition in prospect, still did the visitor linger ; loth by any voluntary act to hasten the blank moment of separation. When lo ! amidst the perpetual rolling of carriages down Maddox-street, one in particular might have been heard to stop at Mrs. Dawes's door. It was not heard, however : not at least by the first-floor lodgers ; for Mr. Carew was just then giving a lively sketch of some droll adventure, that had happened to him during his detention in France, and all the party were laughing too heartily to distinguish anything beyond the sound of their own voices. But though they might be deaf to it, there undoubtedly was a thundering rap at the street door : a double—nay a treble—nay, a quadruple knock ; such as only footmen of a very high grade, serenely conscious of powdered heads and gold-headed canes, have the heart to give : for the reiterated summons which would be sheer impudence in lacqueys of inferior quality, shows in them but as modest assurance and a careful self-respect.

Well would it have gone with Rome, in the days of its consular dignity, if one fair morning-caller at one of the mansions of the eternal city, had been as deaf to the double knocks at the door of her patrician sister, when the lictors came rattling their batons so hastily, and awakened in the breast of the plebeian lady the twofold passions of fear and envy; and by a consecutive train of events, which speaks highly for the influence if not the discretion of the sex, entailed a striking change in the politics of the period. If the double rat-tat in Maddox-street interfered not with public matters—if Prince and Parliament, the Court of Aldermen, and the Common Council remained, nevertheless, firm in their ancient usages, it was not altogether a matter of indifference; for it was fated to affect in no small degree the temper of one private individual.

The knock that was *not* heard was quickly followed by one that was; being a sort of faint and far-off echo of the same: a minor rub-a-dub-dub, caused by the knuckles of Mrs. Dawes resounding on the drawing-room door — Mrs. Dawes's own knuckles, not those of Nanny the housemaid; which showed that the said considerate little landlady held the message committed to her down-stairs of too solemn and particular an import to be delivered by the maid. Opening the door ere there was time to bid her enter, she exclaimed,—

“Oh, Captain Romilly, if you please, here's Miss Drake and Lady Sarah Wigram down below in their carriage a-waiting for you—and they send their remembrances ——”

"No, they don't," said Nanny, in the background: for *she* considered the message her own property.

"Yes, they do," said her mistress; "be quiet, Nanny! And they would like to know whether you have forgotten the engagement you made to go out with them this morning; and they beg me to say, Captain Romilly,——"

"Miss Drake says so," said the prompter with emphasis.

"I desire you 'll hold your tongue, Nanny—that it will be inconvenient for them to wait any longer."

"Oh, they can't do it on no account," said Nanny; "Miss Drake gave me the message herself: she is in *such* a hurry!"

"Nanny, will you be quiet when I tell you?"

No sooner was Romilly aware of the awful fact of Miss Drake's vicinity, than he lost his presence of mind, and starting up exclaimed,—

"Why, she has not found me out already! How on earth ——"

"Why, you see, Captain Romilly, they have been to Madame Fleury's over the way, and saw your horse and groom a-standing at my door; and that led to Miss Drake sending her footman over to ask Robert who you were, and Robert said ——"

"Well, never mind!" said he, peevishly vexed with himself for his want of self-command. "I'll speak to her presently. Tell them I'm coming, there's a good woman: that's all you have to do, Mrs. Dawes."

But Carew, whose mischievous nature delighted in such an embarrassment as this, increased it still more by affectedly urging him to make haste.

“There, there, my dear fellow! shorten your adieux to my ladies, and be off to your own: happy dog that you are, to be under so soft control! Silken bonds to be only exchanged for the rosy fetters of Hymen! Who would not be an engaged man, to be thus looked after, and sweetly called over the coals? Come, come, Romilly! Upon my soul, she won’t stand it much longer!”

“Allow me, Mr. Carew, to—” he was going to say, “settle my own affairs as I please;” but, hot-headed as he naturally was, Captain Romilly remembered that in quarrelling with the head of that family, he should exclude himself for ever from its society: for he was not as yet aware that Carew was that sort of person who would not take an offence unless it perfectly suited his convenience to be affronted. Instead, therefore, of completing the ungrateful sentence, he took the advice of an officious public, hastened his parting compliments, and went off, with a very lame attempt at ease and good humour.

He was not allowed to depart alone; for Carew, curious to witness the manner of his reception below, followed him closely.

“He must,” he said, “pay his respects to the ladies: he had not called since spending the evening in Curzon-street, and he would take this opportunity of apologizing.”

In the recklessness of his vexation, Romilly vowed to himself, as he descended the stairs, that he cared

not how soon an *éclaircissement* with his intended took place; and that he was ready to burst at once every tie of interest, respect, or gratitude, that bound him to a servitude always uninteresting to him, and now becoming positively irksome. All this was uttered very valorously between his teeth: but most men participate, more than they like to acknowledge, in the Fothergill feelings. Disagreeable to them all is the prospect of female wrath and upbraiding, and many a mean little shuffling trick will the best of them have recourse to, to evade an open breach with mother, sister, wife, or mistress; and Romilly, stout-hearted as he believed himself, no sooner saw the querulous, ill-used expression that sat on the face of his betrothed, than he set himself to apologize in the meekest possible style, the presence of Carew serving as a useful diversion: of course, there was no occasion to allude to any female member of that gentleman's family. On that account, Romilly wished his friend had remained within doors; as he would probably mention the circumstance of his wife and daughter being in town with him: it was only natural that he would do so.

But, as it turned out, the captain had no cause for uneasiness on that head; for Carew, as if he really divined what was passing in the young man's mind, kept clear of every dangerous subject. His easy loquacity had never been more fluent and insinuating than at that moment. There he stood by the door of the carriage—it was an open one, barouches being the fashion in those days—there stood cousin John bareheaded, the breeze blowing his

grizzled hair round his handsome face : a countenance so expressive of all that was honest and open that suspicion herself could hardly have attributed to him a thought that required concealment.

Lady Sarah Wigram and her niece had as yet seen but little of him ; the society they kept being in truth not particularly to his taste : and yet, with his usual success in making the agreeable wherever he went, he had contrived, in those few opportunities, to ingratiate himself with both ladies. And on the present occasion Miss Drake, though inwardly fuming at the conduct of her lover, had still a smile to bestow on that “ nice amusing Mr. Carew : such a pleasant creature, my dear, you can’t think,” and was not slow, poor thing, to believe every word he uttered ; when, in what seemed to be the most unpremeditated manner possible, he smoothed the way for Romilly’s excuses : taking in fact the whole blame of the matter on himself.

“ Your arrival,” said he, “ accounts for a certain languor and absence of mind which struck me in our young friend there. Not knowing of any engagement he might have made, I have kept him for an hour past idling at my lodgings ; though, between ourselves, I have been heartily tired of his company—for never was there anything so dull : scarcely a word could I get out of him. Ah, Lady Sarah ! thus it is, you see : we old fellows sit at our ease on the shady side of life, while our youthful enamoratos are sighing and fretting their hearts out in the full blaze of beauty.”

“ You are quite right, my dear Mr. Carew : as

you say, we of a former generation—the *ancien régime*, as I call it——”

“My dear Lady Sarah, what are you saying? What no living soul I am sure but yourself would venture to say; unless they wished to be sent to Coventry for the season. No, no; to put yourself on a level with me—that will never do.”

“No, but really Mr. Carew, I know my position: I do, indeed!”

“Not if you class yourself with such an old fellow as I am, Lady Sarah. No, no, it won’t pass: it will not, I give you my honour.”

“Well, but without professing myself quite an antediluvian, which might look like affectation, still, I assure you, I feel that I am not so young as have been: I do, indeed!”

Here Carew assumed his most taking air of delicate insinuation.

“Excuse me, but if you wish to be believed, your ladyship must not continue to wear that hat. Put on the dowdiest bonnet in your possession, and you will hardly establish the fact; but in that hat, it becomes an utter impossibility.”

“My hat! the Tilney Long. I am told this is the true Tilney Long, and I hope you really like it; for the town I know has a high opinion of Mr. Carew’s taste. You think it becoming then? Sophy dear, Mr. Carew is saying some pretty things about my Tilney hat.”

But “Sophy dear” was absorbed in a whispered discourse with the captain; who had by this time dismissed his horse and man, and had taken his seat

beside her, with just that lamb-like docility to be expected in his sex and predicament. *Nota bene*, the grimness of feature on the lady's part was fast relaxing.

"There is but one epithet for it, Lady Sarah," said Carew, answering for Miss Drake. "Bewitching! quite bewitching! If the bow was but—you know there must be a 'but' in everything mortal—was but on the left side instead of the right."

"Well now that observation strikes me extremely. You certainly, Mr. Carew, have an eye for symmetry—my niece herself made the same remark. You remember, Sophy love, our consultation at Madame Fleury's?"

"Of course, my dear Lady Sarah"—and a most significant smile played round the mouth of Carew, "there can be no question but Miss Drake will always wear her bow (*beau*) nearest her heart."

"Fie, fie!" cried her ladyship, highly delighted with the tender allusion, "I had no idea you were so wicked: but," dropping her voice, "we must speak in whispers, if dear Sophia is to be the subject of our chat; for never was there a being so sensitively modest—so tremblingly alive to everything. My niece's delicacy is—Sophy's delicacy—her delicacy—deli——Dear me! how tiresome those men are!" exclaimed the old lady, peevishly alluding to certain hawkers who had come to the other side of the carriage, and were, after the manner of those warlike days, blowing horns and vociferating, "Great news! Glorious news!" "Bless me! how disagreeable! I hope I am as much of a patriot as I ought to be; but if one is to be deafened in this way, it is enough

to make one wish that there were not quite so many of these glorious victories. No, no, no! go along, go along with you!" and the old lady exerted her small voice, and shrunk back, as one of the fellows came bawling in her ear, and presenting one of his papers to her ("firing a broadside at her poor old ladyship," as Carew afterwards described it). "Oh, drive on, William: bid them drive on, if you please, Mr. Carew; and good-morning to you: I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing more of you in——" the words Curzon-street were literally drowned in a flourish of trumpets.

"Great news! Great news!" The words caught the ear of Selby as she was putting on her hat at the little glass which hung between the drawing-room windows. Some malicious Puck, some demon of mischief, must have incited her to leave the dressing-glass in her own chamber for that shabby little oval piece of furniture.

"Mama," she was just saying, "am I really looking sea-green this morning, or is it only the tint peculiar to Mrs. Dawes's looking-glasses?" Alas! there was another face in that neighbourhood which was destined ere long to wear the colour of jealousy.

Before her mother could reply, Selby had turned suddenly to the window: "Oh, do you hear what they are calling in the street? It's something about a victory: it is, indeed?" and Selby, a stranger to London and its frequent false reports, believed, in her simplicity, every word of the story. "I must find out what they are saying, and where the battle has been," she cried, growing quite excited; and

throwing up the sash, she leaned out, all eagerness—drinking in every word that was uttered by those coarse voices, as if her very life depended on gaining further information. The excitement of her feelings threw an additional glow over her complexion, and a more complete picture of youthful beauty than she presented at that moment you could not have found, had you searched the town from May Fair to Smithfield. A few seconds later, and all would have been safe, for the heiress's equipage was in the very act of moving off; but when was there ever yet a moment, or the fraction of a moment, too short for the perpetration of mischief?

Whether Captain Romilly distinguished, above the hubbub of the streets, the creaking of that particular window as Selby threw it open, or was impelled by any other impulse, certain it is that he raised his eyes in that very direction just as Miss Drake was speaking to him; and she, following the direction of those expressive eyes, looked up also: but then their behaviour became totally dissimilar, for she left her sentence unfinished, and never once removed her eyes from Mrs. Dawes's first floor till the house was out of sight; while he, feeling instantly all the imprudence of his conduct, turned his looks and conversation to a totally opposite point, talking faster and faster as he found his betrothed less disposed to answer him. Her scowl and her silence would have revealed to him that she had seen more than was desirable, even without the aid of her aunt's innocent observations on the height of dear Sophia's complexion: of course, we were speaking metaphorically

when we described it as turning green; the fact was, that the whity-brown had assumed rather the character of brickdust.

“I see you are getting over-heated, Sophy love: are you quite sure you are equal to so much shopping this morning?”

“Morning, ma’am! why, it is almost noonday! You know very well I had settled to come out at least an hour earlier: but another time,” with emphasis, “I shall be aware of *all* the attractions of Mr. Carew’s society and lodgings, and shall fix my plans accordingly.”

“He is certainly a very agreeable person,” said Lady Sarah, timidly; for she could perceive that something was amiss, though quite ignorant—poor obtuse, old soul!—from whence the mischief had arisen. “A very nice man is Mr. Carew, and his taste in female dress——”

“Ph-o-o, ma’am!” retorted the niece, ferociously; and the aunt was silenced. For, strange as it may appear, the kind-hearted old lady, whose latter years had been devoted to the comfort of this sister’s child, was, amongst her whole establishment, the very individual on whom the heiress most commonly vented her ill-humour. To the uncomplaining Lady Sarah, might have been fairly ascribed that character for amiability which Miss Drake had managed to establish in the opinion of the world: here was the grand secret for her general placidity—here was the safety-valve. Had all those daily skits of ill-nature, those snappish rejoinders and caustic remarks, been distributed among her friends, instead of being aimed

at this one particular relation, her smooth reputation must soon have been destroyed.

A system such as this, can only be defended on the principle that it is nobler to insult an equal than an inferior; but I cannot help thinking that Miss Drake had better have scolded her tradespeople and servants. The milliner might have chafed under abuse she dared not retaliate, but it would have been a great solace to her to have added thereupon a broad item to the Christmas bill; and then, for the lady's-maid, a few tears, to be sure, might have been shed on account of "Mississ's wile temper," but the unfailing sympathy of the servants' hall would have gone far to dry them up: not to speak of a little extra flirtation with the favourite footman, and the reversion of various cast-off dresses. Such compensation was denied poor Lady Sarah: there was no running account, no powdered John to console her; all she could do, and very well she really did it, was to blind herself, as well as others, to the full extent of the evil, and talk of "dear Sophia's over-excitement, and the delicacy of her nervous system: so soon put out of order."

Miss Drake's first acquaintance with Captain Romilly was a halcyon time for her aunt; for then things had gone on comparatively smoothly, and the heiress had found little occasion to "wig" her old companion: the young man was never in her case what might be called an ardent lover; but he and his uncle having made up their minds to the necessity of courting Miss Drake, the thing had been gone through decently enough. Ever since Romilly's visit to

Horton, however, Lady Sarah had been conscious of a change. Slow of apprehension and utterly devoid of tact, she had seen nothing on the surface of affairs, but that the captain was rather out of spirits sometimes, and had engagements of his own that would not allow of his being quite so regular as usual in his attendance in Curzon-street: but Sophia either regarded these things with less indulgence, or had found some deeper cause for complaint; for from that time forward her impertinence to her aunt had been resumed, with even more than its former bitterness. She could not wholly conceal her peevishness from her intended husband; but as to poor Lady Sarah, she, to use a vulgar but expressive phrase, was “catching it” from morning till night.

CHAPTER III.

HAD Miss Drake done what was expected of her by the Marshams, and taken Fanny to stay with her till her wedding took place, she would by this time have been considerably enlightened as to the cause of that languor and abstraction which had lately become observable in the manners of Captain Romilly ; but the heiress, aware that she had, in an unguarded moment, given some ground for expectations she now found it inconvenient to fulfil, had taken so little notice of her youthful bridesmaid since her arrival in town, that no communication of a nature at all confidential had as yet passed between them.

Now, however, it occurred to her that Fanny might be useful in resolving certain conjectures arising upon the events of that unlucky drive into Maddox-street—doubts, indeed, they could hardly be called, for being in constant communication with the Luttrels, she had heard the story of Carew's unexpected return to the bosom of his family ; and knew that when he made his appearance at Horton, it was with a beautiful daughter under his arm.

It would be doing injustice, therefore, to Miss Drake's penetration if we were to suppose her in

much doubt as to the identity of this young lady with the very pretty creature at Mr. Carew's lodging; but as Fanny Marsham was acquainted with Miss Carew, she would be able to certify the fact: and the thing had better be confirmed at once.

The next morning, therefore, after a very disturbed night, the heiress hurried off to Mr. Fothergill's; and fortune was so far propitious to her, that he, being engaged with his housekeeper, Fanny and she had the drawing-room entirely to themselves. But Fanny owed Miss Drake a grudge, and being in that state which nurses call "contrariness," could not be brought to give any very important information. It was in truth but little she was capable of giving, as Mr. Fothergill had not yet made up his mind to call upon his cousin, and the Carew's change of lodging was at present unknown to him and Fanny.

Vain, therefore, were Miss Drake's interrogatories: her little bridesmaid took a secret pleasure in contradicting all her conjectures, without volunteering many of her own; and, while affecting a carelessness highly provoking, she lost no opportunity of confirming the jealousy of poor Sophia, by insinuating how much Captain Romilly had been charmed with the fair Carew when he saw her at Horton, and the great attention he had paid her.

Miss Drake retired from the colloquy as unsatisfied as ever, and still more suspicious: nor did the deportment of Romilly, when they again met, contribute to soothe her alarm.

There was a glow over the young man's countenance, when he presented himself rather late that

evening in Curzon-street, which might have arisen from wine, or hurried walking to make up for lost time: for the glow of happiness it certainly was not; though the restless eye and forced smile which accompanied it might have imposed on a less scrutinizing spectator than Sophy Drake. It was an expression that had seldom or never sat upon his features, in any of his visits to the home or the opera-box of his affianced bride. Nevertheless, this unwonted vivacity—if it did lead to further and blacker doubts, and chanced to convey to the sullen heiress the surmise that her false lover had just left company more agreeable to his taste—soon ceased to disturb her.

Soon, very soon, did all signs of extraordinary animation give way to the sobering influences around him, as his restless eye travelled about the room, seeking something beyond show and insipidity. He had found himself there, and in the self-same company many a time before; and, even if his mind was not stirred by discovering any touching reciprocity of sentiment between himself and his companions, or his heart warmed to pleasure and gaiety, still he had been satisfied to take things as they were. In those days—they had but lately passed away—he had seemed to others, and even to himself, a man of easy disposition; who, if unable to discover any inordinate gratification in the more prominent features of his position as a lover, was content to derive a certain amount of pleasure from the meaner adjuncts of the case: the splendour of the house and establishment of which he was so soon to be master, and its perfect arrangement; the troop of well-ordered servants, who would ever be ready at his call; the carriages, the

spacious apartments, with their rich furniture and masterpieces of art.

Alas! it was a masterpiece of nature that had changed all these things to him—for changed they were: that very scene, for the sake of which he had striven to believe that, after all, something of the romantic might be sacrificed to the possession of its almost princely properties—how did it look to him now? Dull, cold, and tasteless! the draperies heavy, the ornaments ill-chosen. One would have said that no room of moderate size could be lighted with better judgment than Miss Drake's boudoir: yet, shaded as the candles were, they seemed now to offend his sight; for as he sat bestowing his languid attention on Lady Sarah, he pressed his hand upon his eyelids, and answered her with difficulty. Then did his thoughts turn to the little parlour in Maddox-street, with all its meagre and shabby appointments; and, for the moment, his heart bounded with a sensation of freedom and relief: but it was only a passing delusion. He looked up with a sigh of mingled pain and pleasure, and still before him were those images of empty pomp: the beautiful harp so rarely touched—for the heiress had neither melody in her soul nor execution in her fingers—and the richly-bound volumes that were never opened. He felt disgust for everything about him; but most of all were his bitter reflections levelled at himself: at that quarter was his contempt unmeasured, immeasurable!

It was hardly possible that a face so expressive as Charles Romilly's should not display some symptom of the discontent that was gnawing his heart-strings;

and as his mistress, however lavish she might be of cross-looks herself, found them hard to tolerate in another, and especially in him, she very soon arose, and, complaining of drowsiness, retired for the night. And he—never to the oldest and goutiest of courtiers was leave more welcome !—broke from Lady Sarah's lament over the nervousness of dear Sophia, and left the house : as miserable a man as it would have been easy to meet with, even in the compass of the largest city of the world.

What might have been the final result of that fierce struggle which was agitating the impetuous young man, had he been left solely to himself, it would be difficult to guess ; for, thoroughly awake as he had now become to the true state of his feelings, he was nevertheless so hampered by circumstances, and had resigned himself hitherto so completely to the guidance of others, that it would have required a very strong and determined effort to break from the trammels in which he was involved.

The only being who could have helped him out of his difficulties, was the uncle whose worldly conduct had plunged him into them ; and the idea of confiding in Colonel Widdrington, open as Romilly's nature was inclined to be, never for a moment crossed his mind : for it was not only that the colonel was cold and forbidding, even to eccentricity ; but a course of low profligacy in his youth had impressed upon him so bad an opinion of women, that he was utterly incapable of sympathizing with any delicate distresses respecting any individual of that sex : which he held in contempt, if not aversion. An application to

him, therefore, would be not merely vain, but ruinous.

On the other hand, supposing that Romilly trusted to his own unassisted efforts to break off his match with Miss Drake; how could he do so great an injustice to the woman to whom his word and troth were deliberately plighted, as to desert her almost at the foot of the altar? Or how endure the odium which must attach to such a breach of good faith?

In the eyes of the world, there could not exist a single excuse for his conduct; nor even in the depths of his own more indulgent conscience, could he find much to extenuate it. The engagement had subsisted many months, and he could not allege that the heiress was in any respect altered since the period when his uncle had first persuaded him to address her: she was not less amiable or attractive, nor had she done anything to deserve the intolerable insult and injury that his heart was meditating towards her.

Still, could Romilly have believed himself indifferent to Miss Drake, his scruples might have been overcome: but there was no ground for self-deceit on that head. Her disposition had in it little of the extatic or caressing, but she had always shewn herself ready enough to accept his attentions whenever he had been in the humour to offer them; and when, in the negligence of his own indifference, he chanced to omit his duty, in this respect, she was always cross enough to give him a very fair notion of the strength of her attachment.

Calm reflection was not the usual characteristic of Charles Romilly: in too many instances he had shewn himself wild and reckless, and eager to ac-

cept present gratification at the expense of future repentance; but he had some moral principle and a great share of good-nature, and as he thought over this most perplexing part of the dilemma, he found himself murmuring the words, "Poor Sophy! Unhappy Sophia!" Miserable as he was himself, he could not help pitying from his soul the woman he was deceiving: she who had already bestowed upon him all the tenderness of which her nature was capable, and waited but the signing of a few parchments to endow him with the more substantial advantages which her wealth and position commanded,—little did she deserve from him the sorrow and confusion of face which would ensue to her, if, at this late season of the affair, she were to be rejected for another.

And then that other!—What doubt, what perplexity, presented itself in that quarter! for supposing him "rascal enough," as he designated it, to jilt Sophy Drake for the lovely Carew, who could answer for his success with *her*? She was friendly and kind to him, 'tis true; but then it was her nature to be so: a certain sweet cordiality, inseparable from her generous, confiding disposition, was the natural attribute of this fascinating creature; and rendered her, even more than her consummate beauty, an object of admiration to all who approached her: and he confessed that he had seen her more tenderly insinuating, more bewitchingly soft in her attentions, to Mr. Francis, than she had ever shewn herself to him.

That that beautiful form enclosed a heart capable of the warmest and truest affection, was a fact never to be questioned: but that heart—that treasure beyond rubies!—might long since have ceased to be in

her own possession. She was no mere child, fresh from the school-room and ready to lavish her affections on the first man who offered himself, but a woman of cultivated mind, and taste matured by observation and the commerce of society. He even thought he had remarked at times a tender abstraction in her deportment, which might be presumed to have its origin in some deeper matter than mere absence of mind: but this, though it had before occurred to him, might, after all, be but fancy.

“ Ah,” he exclaimed, as he walked or rather rushed up and down his chamber, “ what is it but fancy altogether! a tissue of wild dreaming that can never be realized! Heaven only knows whether I am to turn out a fool or a villain, or only the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth !”

And then Miss Drake’s star, which had seemed to predominate a little, waned again in the horizon, and he wished “ those confounded debts ” were paid ; for then, come of it what might, he would break this mercenary engagement, and follow up his profession, happy in the self-respect resulting from an honourable independence. But vain was the thought—the bills were *not* paid ; for his uncle allowed them to remain undischarged, as a sure check upon what he esteemed the young man’s roving disposition: the creditors remaining quiet in the mean while, on the understanding that they were to be satisfied as soon as he became the husband of the rich heiress. And thus, although poor Romilly might ponder the subject for hours—think till he believed himself on the verge of madness—he saw not a hope of escape or even of compromise. All, he told himself, was over

—it was vain to struggle with his iron, or rather his golden destiny—his acquaintance with Selby Carew must be held but as a dream: one of those delicious yet fantastic visions that we almost weep to awake from. Yet awake we must at last; ay, and go about the ordinary business of life as though Queen Mab had never been with *us*.

Into such a sober state of mind did young Romilly reason himself, that he very nearly came to the conclusion that the safest, wisest, and most honourable course he could take, would be to shun all further intercourse with the Carews. His heart, indeed, sank at the contemplation of such a sacrifice of all his dearest joys; those eyes, so sweet and yet so sensible, seemed to look reproachfully upon him; and it was as if the pleasant musical voice of Mrs Carew was repeating in his ears the words with which she had last parted from him—“We shall see you again soon, Captain Romilly?”

And these dear friends—for, dropping any tenderer title, such he must ever esteem them—these frank, warm-hearted, most amiable people; he must throw them off at once, reject their proffered kindness, and suffer himself to appear to them indifferent, rude, or capricious: anything and everything most opposite to his real sentiments! The idea was too mortifying: he would adopt a middle course: not break off the intimacy abruptly, if at all, but make his visits in Maddox-street less frequent and considerably shorter; taking care to call sometimes when he knew the ladies to be from home: in short, keeping in all things the strictest command over his secret inclinations. Circumspection should direct his every look and move-

ment ; and he would cherish that better part of valour which consists not, as the vulgar imagine, in running away from danger, but in facing it with a vigilant eye and a heart resolved and steady.

And now, so indisputable seemed to him the wisdom of the course he had thus roughly chalked out, that Romilly began to wish he had *not* written that letter to his friend Captain Luttrell ; for in the first flush of his excitement, on meeting Selby at Horton Hall, he had followed (as in truth he was much too apt to do) the immediate impulse of the moment, and had opened his heart to this dear friend of his, more fully and frankly than he had ever done before.

Amongst all his youthful associates, Hartley was the one whose advice had most weight with Romilly : for whatever had been his own career in life, Captain Luttrell was competent to bestowing the most discreet counsel upon his friends ; and the occasional seriousness of his manners, and his singular freedom from the vices and follies at which his friendly warnings were aimed, conferred upon those warnings a respect and consideration which many an older officer in the regiment found it impossible to excite. To this esteemed friend, therefore—this Mentor of five-and-twenty, had Romilly despatched a full relation of his late adventures ; describing, in his most glowing language, the struggles between love and duty, inclination and remorse : which, as he assured him, had been convulsing his very soul, ever since his recognition of the Devonshire beauty in the person of Hartley's cousin, Selby Carew. And he

had urgently pressed his old companion to weigh his case dispassionately, and decide for him whether—feeling, as he did, that his heart was devoted irrevocably to another woman—he ought, in common honour or honesty, to fulfil his engagement to Miss Drake? Whether it would not be, in fact, a kinder act towards Sophia herself, to break off the match at once; and save her from the misfortune of being united to one who could from henceforth regard her only with a sentiment of loathing and aversion?

While dashing off this letter, in his first intoxication, the arguments contained in it seemed to himself so reasonable and just, that he was persuaded his more sober-minded friend would see things in the very same light: but as his excitement abated, his hopes of obtaining a favourable sentence cooled in the same degree; and, as we have said, he began to wish he had confined the matter to his own aching heart, and had never sought counsel from one whose own upright walk and unswerving principle must necessarily constitute him, if not a stern, at least a very uncompromising judge.

With a heavy sigh, he acknowledged to himself that he must trust in the strength that Heaven vouchsafed him, and not to the help of any earthly friend; and it is certain that so long as Captain Romilly kept the stage entirely to himself, and spoke only in soliloquy, his performance might be pronounced extremely creditable: but, alas! other actors were to tread the boards with him, and other prompters were to be at hand, besides prudence and propriety, to give him his cue.

CHAPTER IV.

LEAVING our military friend to follow out his good intentions as best he might, we must ascertain what may be passing at a certain mansion in Great George-street, Westminster: not that abode of formal monotony, where poor Fanny Marsham “sighs and laments her in vain,” but one nearly opposite to Mr. Fothergill’s, well known as the town residence of the Luttrels, of Horton Hall; and to which Mr. Francis and his family, who have no place of their own in London, never fail to resort, when pleasure or business call them up to the metropolis.

The two Luttrels, indeed, notwithstanding a marked dissimilarity in tastes and pursuits, mind and manners, were accustomed to live on the most excellent terms together. For the sake of that real goodness he knew his brother to possess, Mr. Luttrell tolerated many a little foible in Francis, which in another person he would have condemned with unrelenting severity. And, on the other hand, there was such strength of intellect, and uprightness of conduct in the head of the house, that Mr. Francis,

feeling, besides his natural affection, a certain though acknowledged awe of his brother, took, on ordinary occasions, some care to keep those peculiarities of character in subservience which he knew to be offensive to him.

Their difference of age, too, had its due influence in preserving this smoothness of intercourse. Advanced in life as they both were (the youngest verging on sixty), Mr. Luttrell continued to regard Francis as still somewhat of a boy, and to humour his occasional weaknesses accordingly; while the other could never quite divest himself of old school-day associations, when the distinctions caused by the difference of a few years had been so strongly marked and insisted on. Those eight years of seniority had caused his tall brother William to seem in his eyes a being of a distinct and superior order; much to be relied on, *very* much to be feared, and never, on any possible occasion, to be contradicted. The duration of such youthful impressions might not be suspected, much less acknowledged, by the proprietors of the Hall and the Lodge; yet in a certain measure they certainly still existed, inspiring in the rather harsh and unbending character of the one a degree of indulgence, and in the other of respectful observance, which, as we have remarked, rendered their fraternal intercourse both pleasant and profitable.

No wonder, then, that the sudden arrival of this younger brother was a source of self-gratulation to Mr. Luttrell. He was just in that state of health to appreciate the unforced sympathy of a kind and intelligent companion: for Mrs. Luttrell's anxiety

about her husband had not been without sufficient foundation. The critical position of public affairs had kept Parliament sitting late that year, causing such confinement and fatigue to the members, as could hardly fail to affect a constitution somewhat delicate, and now pining for a more renovating atmosphere.

Medical treatment might have availed to a certain extent; but Mr. Luttrell, like many a man who secretly values himself on strength of character, had an illiberal prejudice against doctors, and would never have recourse to them except on extraordinary emergencies. The low fever, therefore, generated by foul air and late hours, hung about him from day to day; casting by its withering influence, a murky shade over every event, public or private, that befell himself, his family, or the nation at large.

For a state of invalidism like this, the company of a trusted friend was, in good sooth, a grand desideratum. Married men gratefully recognising the benefits of their position in life, may wonder why Mr. Luttrell had not already sent for his wife to comfort him; and it is not without reluctance we are constrained to confess that her presence in his vicinity just then was about the very last thing which that gentleman would have proposed to himself as an alleviation to his troubles, mental or bodily. Had he been forming a collection of riddles, after the example of the charming Emma Woodhouse and her friend Miss Smith, that gallant one which figured in the very first page of their manuscript would scarcely, we

fear, have found room in his: to-wit, "My first doth affliction denote," &c. &c.

Not that the member for —— was deficient in love for his gentle Isabella, but he had an invincible dislike to be "made much" of in sickness; and he knew from fretful experience how officious, though well-meant, would be her solicitous attentions. Never would she approach him without inquiring after his symptoms, or imploring him to send for a doctor; or recommending chicken-broth, which he detested, or white-wine whey, which was still more odious to his taste; and even, if he succeeded in silencing her by some gruff answer, still would she be irritating every nerve in his sensitive frame by her noiseless step—too quiet by half—and those looks of anxious fondness and meek misery. "But Francis is a rational creature, and will give me my own way, and let me manage my constitution as I please. And, moreover, I have a good deal to say to him just now."

Ungrateful husband that he was! But he had his reward: for there are, as we all have experienced, particular seasons in the life-time of man, when all things seem to run adverse to his wishes and expectations; and even his bosom friend and nearest of kin prove awkward, as it were, and wholly unsatisfactory in their dealings with him. Even in the half-hour's chat which ensued upon their first greeting, Mr. Luttrell began to fancy his brother not altogether so agreeable as usual: he did not manifest his accustomed deep interest in hearing and canvassing the various topics which, to the elder gentleman, stood forward as points of paramount importance. Public matters, for

instance: this new bill that they were trying to carry, important as was the measure, he seemed hardly to have given it a thought: and the Westminster election—how carelessly he treated it! Even when he, Mr. Luttrell, talked of his son, wondering that he had not heard from him, and expressing his fear of not living to see him again; his brother, he thought, scarcely entered into the subject as he was wont to do, or gave it his undivided attention.

If the elder Luttrell dared trust his own judgment, there was really a touch almost of levity in the deportment of Francis: a cheerful countenance was all very well in its way; but, on the contrary, there was a sort of off-hand, reckless vivacity which was always out of keeping, except in a Frenchman. And then Francis was so much more inclined to talk than to listen; and would be chattering about people for whom he (Mr. Luttrell) did not care a straw. The Carews! What were the Carews to them, at a time when events of such overwhelming importance were impending. Harping upon those persons indeed! and wanting to be meddling in their affairs. For his own part, Mr. Luttrell had but a poor opinion of them: the character of John himself seemed questionable, to say the best of it; and he roundly asserted, on his brother persisting in the subject, that they had better have as little as possible to do with any of the set.

But Mr. Francis, usually so deferential in his fraternal character, seemed now to find difficulty in seeing things in the very clear and sensible light in which his brother took pains to display them. In the course of that evening he would still be recur-

ring to these Carews; and though he presently gave up John as little better than a scamp, he kept on chattering about the women of that family,—“the Carew women,” as the other contemptuously styled them: persons for whom Mr. Luttrell, remembering old grievances, professed to have marvellous little esteem.

He succeeded at last in getting rid of the subject: but the brotherly communings prospered not much the more; for it was plain, from his occasional abstraction and random replies, that the younger Luttrell was engrossed by some idea quite foreign to what was agitating the mind of his brother: and Mr. Luttrell grew peevish, and began wishing that Francis had remained at home. Then there was “our good Pickering,” as he was often affectionately termed by the Horton ladies: his behaviour was scarcely a whit more satisfactory to his patron; for he also was full to overflowing of the great Carew mystery. In fact, one chief reason of his revisiting London so immediately, was to ascertain and transmit to the Hall a correct report of how many wives John Carew really had upon his present list; and the incautious little man could not be made to understand that the topic so interesting at Horton, might not be altogether as acceptable in the less gossiping region of Great George-street. A niceness of tact, or delicate appreciation of character were not the qualities which his most indulgent friends could attribute to the reverend Thomas: Jupiter might frown and shake his curls ambrosial, as much as he pleased, but it was not until the thunder was actually rattling about his ears, that Pickering would take a hint.

On this particular occasion he shewed himself utterly unmindful of the displeasure Mr. Luttrell evinced at any more allusions to the Carews. Pishes and pshaws fell thick but unheeded; till his patron, growing savage, called out, in a tone unmistakeably deep and decided,—

“Now, for Heaven’s sake! let me hear no more of that unlucky connection of ours. I have had quite enough of the Carews from my brother Francis” (it was now about two days after their arrival in town).

“Ha!” rejoined the other quickly, his fancy veering round at once upon another tack. “Ha! you don’t say so? Mr. Francis! ha! really! well then he has, my dear sir—he *has* then broached the subject in your presence, eh?”

“He has pestered me to death with it; and I must positively request that you at least, Mr. Pickering, will leave it untouched.”

“Only one word, my dear sir; but one, and I will be as mute as you desire: but will you suffer me to ask—may I, in short, without incurring the imputation of impertinent curiosity, *just* venture to inquire—if Mr. Francis’s discourse touched on all the members of the Carew family indiscriminately, or whether—eh! ahem?”—Mr. Luttrell showed symptoms of being puzzled as well as cross. “Or whether,” proceeded the little man, rubbing his long chin with an air infinitely significant, “his talk did not run more on the *daughter* than the father?”

For a moment or two Mr. Luttrell fixed his deep-set eyes on the spectacles that shaded those of his

meddling friend ; but still meeting there the expression so startling to him, his colour changed, and lowering his voice, he demanded what Mr. Pickering was alluding to.

“ You can hardly mean—you cannot intend to insinuate that——”

Mr. Luttrell could not finish the sentence, or clothe an idea so repugnant to him in actual language ; but a nod from Pickering, a sly and affirmative gesture, completed his patron’s discomposure. He started from his seat with an alacrity quite foreign to his usual stateliness of motion, exclaiming,—“ Impossible, impossible ! It cannot be ! No, Mr. Pickering, Francis is weak, in some respects thoughtless, and apt to consult his feelings rather than his judgment ; but an utter aberration of intellect, such as a thing like *that* would argue—Heavenly powers !” looking up *à la* Kemble.—“ No, it can never be !”

Mr. Pickering had, in this instance, forgotten to estimate the importance and extreme distastefulness of the information he was so eager to convey. He had merely contemplated the talking over a little family matter in a calm, cosy, confidential manner : he in one comfortable chair at the library table, and his patron seated in another, rather larger and still more comfortable ; and they were both to have been very curious, though rather sorry, uttering wise commonplaces upon the dangerous condition of “ poor Francis,” and wondering mildly what was to be the end of his unhappy delusion.

Strange enough, that, with his intimate knowledge of Mr. Luttrell’s peculiarities, Mr. Pickering should

not have calculated on some such explosion as this ! He was doomed again to have his report discredited : Mr. Luttrell *professing* at least to consider it as nothing more than an idle fancy ; and though Pickering could plainly perceive, by his heightened colour and hurried deportment, that the inuendo so rashly hazarded had taken full effect ; yet that effect was so evidently disagreeable in its nature, that the reverend Thomas judged it “ wisest, virtuous, discreet, best,” to creep out of the dilemma as fast as possible, and shift the burthen upon the shoulder of another. He hastened to state, therefore, that “ the notion,” whether true or false, had in no wise originated with himself : he was innocent even of a surmise on the subject : should never so much as have dreamed of a thing of that nature, had not Miss Luttrell herself suggested it to him. Here he was waspishly interrupted.

“ God bless me ! Mr. Pickering, you don’t pretend to say that my niece,—that Esther Luttrell, has thought fit to call *your* attention to the weakness and misconduct of her father ?”

“ Nothing of the sort, my dear sir. Miss Luttrell, as you say, is much too correct, too highly observant in her filial character, to act a part so disrespectful. But, my dear Mr. Luttrell, you must not be offended with me for saying, that, after being domiciled in your family for so many years past, I must necessarily be too well acquainted with the mind and opinions of most of its members, not to be a tolerable interpreter of the familiar countenances around me. Eh ? you understand—you take my meaning ? I am sure, when I say that, though Miss Luttrell made no

verbal allusion to the subject in hand, or Mrs. Grey either, yet in the looks of both ladies it has been impossible for me not to perceive, and perceiving not to construe, a significant something—an intelligence, in fact ; a certain expression——”

Here, however, the face before him grew so very threatening, that the little man adroitly changed his tone. “But I perceive—I know what you are going to say, my dear sir; and I quite agree to it: the human countenance is not always the index we ought to trust. Even those we seem to know the best may sometimes deceive us ; or, supposing myself not quite mistaken, Miss Luttrell herself, discerning as she is in general, might in this case have been misled, and have fancied far more than she had reasonable ground for—eh? don’t you think we may settle it in that way? The other sex, Mr. Luttrell, much as I respect them (when in their proper place) the female sex——”

“Say women, Mr. Pickering,” said his patron, impatiently tattooing on the table before him : “let me beg of you to call things by their right names, and speak without circumlocution.”

“I will, my dear sir ; I will do so : it is a habit one is apt to indulge in occasionally.”

“It may be an indulgence to you, to me it renders conversation insupportable.”

“Exactly so!—precisely. Well, my dear sir, the ladies, as you were observing——”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickering, but the remark, whatever it is to be, is all your own ; so pray assume the credit of it, without any reference to me.

You were mentioning an idle story : that is to say, an idea—a supposition, highly derogatory to the person who is the subject of it ; and to which, I must frankly tell you, I attach but little weight. To you I am ready to allow, that my brother may have certain weak points——” The name of Miss Blenkinsop fell, as if involuntarily, from the lips of Mr. Pickering, and occasioned a peevish rejoinder. “ Well, well, I know : yes, of course, those things are always possible to human frailty ; and Francis having been the youngest of his family, had a degree of license allowed him, which I believe to have been highly detrimental to the solidity of his character. But,” raising his voice indignantly, “ he is not yet in his second childhood : not yet such a frivolous, doating, incorrigible blockhead—so lost to himself, so regardless of his family——”

Mr. Luttrell luckily stopped to draw breath ; and the pause was filled up with an emphatic “ H-u-s-h ! ” from his companion ; for Mr. Pickering was aware that the door behind the chair of the excited speaker had just then opened to admit the very object of this agitating conference.

Mr. Francis, as he entered, was giving orders to a servant without.

“ Let him wait a few minutes, John,” he was saying. “ Bid the person wait, and I will examine what he has brought, and give him an answer immediately.”

Then addressing himself to his brother—it was the first time they had met that morning—he inquired after his health and his night’s rest, with a tenderness

that would formerly have been imputed to the truest sympathy: but was now distrusted as a mere form of conventional civility.

Mr. Francis, on his part, soon detected the cloud which had gathered on his brother's brow; but being altogether ignorant of the share he had in this evident discomposure, the discovery only incited him to exert himself to amuse and exhilarate the invalid. And as he happened that morning to be in remarkably good spirits, he could well afford a little time and trouble, spent in cheering and dulcifying the irritable nerves of his brother. Little did he imagine that every jocund word which fell from his lips served only to increase Mr. Luttrell's ill-humour; and though he found himself contradicted and cut short in every subject he touched, Mr. Francis was too good-tempered to resent a peevishness, which he, somewhat after the manner of Mrs. Grey, ascribed simply to the workings of suppressed bile. So he tried one gossiping subject after another; and as he leaned on the high back of his brother's chair, he kept telegraphing to Mr. Pickering, with a kindly shrug; meaning thereby to express his compassion and consequent indulgence for "poor William's whimsical state—so symptomatic of liver!"

Presently, as a likely means of diverting the discourse into a pleasanter channel, he referred to a neat-looking parcel which had been put into his hands as he crossed the hall; observing, as he proceeded to open it, that he must really not keep Rundell and Bridge's man waiting much longer.

The sharp little eyes of the reverend Thomas

twinkled inquisitively as they fell on the two little morocco cases; which, rather ostentatiously as he thought, were in this way given to view. His meddling perceptions were busily set to work; while Mr. Francis, with an air of peculiar satisfaction, opened the caskets and displayed their contents—viz., two pair of pearl ear-rings of the newest fashion.

“Look, my dear William,” said he, holding the trinkets before Mr. Luttrell’s eyes; “I shall really esteem it as a favour, if you will tell me which of these patterns you think the most elegant. Or, perhaps, I had better appeal to Mr. Pickering: he is certainly more of a lady’s man.”

“Francis, for Heaven’s sake! don’t apply that silly term to any of us: even when uttered in jest (as, of course, you intend it), it sounds like a covert sarcasm. Besides,” impatiently, and eyeing the jewels askance, “I am no judge of this sort of thing.”

“I know it, my dear William,” said the other, kindly; “while to me, independently of their destination, they are interesting, as specimens of fine workmanship. Though I have seen things I liked better, they are perhaps hardly worthy of the cheek they are destined to rest against. What say you, Mr. Pickering?”

At these words, Mr. Luttrell breathed thick; and, grasping the arms of his chair, turned half round towards his brother; his countenance exhibiting symptoms of wrath, such as must have frightened the reverend Thomas into silence, if he had attended to it. But the spirit of curiosity was

raging within: his small person and tattling propensities were both on tiptoe, and he eagerly answered,—

“Nay; but, my dear sir, why appeal to me? How can I decide the point, or, in fact, take any interest in it, unless I know who the lady is: eh, Mr. Francis? The fair object—for fair, no doubt, she is for whom these elegant ornaments are intended—”

“Lady!” repeated Mr. Luttrell, in an awful voice—“Fair object! Mr. Pickering; what folly is all this? His *daughter*, of course—my niece, Miss Luttrell: for whom else should such things as these be meant?”

“By no means,” said his brother, quietly: “Esther, you know, never wears ear-rings.”

“Oh, I know nothing of the matter!” said the other, peevishly, turning to the desk at which he had been writing. “I am thankful that I have something else to occupy my mind than frivolities of this nature: and it might be well for you, Francis, if you could say the same.”

Again, rising tremulously on his toes, the inquisitive Pickering ventured—not indeed to make any verbal inquiry; yet the question—“Whom are they for?” was so plainly formed and trembling on his tongue, that Mr. Francis, by no means loth, answered the mute gesture as if the very words had been spoken.

“I have long been wishing,” he said, “to offer Miss Carew some little token of my esteem; and observing that she usually wears this sort of orna-

ment, I fancy that I cannot choose anything in the way of jewellery that will be more acceptable to her. But"—and he closed the little cases with an air of dissatisfaction—"these are not quite the thing, Mr. Pickering: it does not strike me that either of these specimens they have sent me will altogether suit the style and contour of our lovely cousin. I suppose I must go into the City about it, and choose from a greater variety. For, in spite of my brother's contempt of these frivolities," smiling complacently, "*I must confess I rather pique myself on my taste in female costume.*"

"Francis! Francis!"

"Nay, my dear William, allow me at least all the privilege of my inferior position as a younger brother. While you, in the glory of primogeniture, are building and planting for posterity, or settling the affairs of our county as its honourable member; suffer me to live at ease, wasting my useless energy on the trifles and frivolities of life—objects of taste and virtue, or——"

Here, as ill luck would have it, he paused for a word.

"Or gallantry," suggested Mr. Pickering, in spite of Jupiter.

The word seemed quite to please Mr. Francis, for he repeated it with an obvious chuckle—"Ha, ha! very good! Well, gallantry, if you will have it so: though, in this case, consanguinity, connection, and so forth, put all that kind of thing, of course, out of the question. But gallantry let it be: the word has been in vogue for many a day, and will be, I

take it, till the end of time. But I am breaking in on your more serious avocations, William ; so *au revoir*, as Lady Sarah says : for the old lady loves a French phrase now and then, though I would not always answer for its true pronunciation."

"The *old lady*, as you justly call her, Francis, is, I believe, much about your own age."

"Five years older, at least, my dear William : but in plain English, good-morning, till we meet again."

With anybody but the elder Luttrell, Mr. Pickering could scarcely have failed displaying some portion, at least, of the triumph which crowed within his breast at this most open and ample verification of his lately discredited report ; but the deep and solemn displeasure sitting in every stern, though handsome feature of his patron, silenced at once and warned him off the premises. He intended, besides, to have a little more talk with Mr. Francis : but here he was disappointed, that gentleman having alertly walked forth on his own—business, shall we call it ? or pleasure—or what might it be that sent him along the streets that morning with a step so light, and a gait so *débonnaire* ?

We have seen that he came to town in a pleasant frame of mind ; and, strange though it may sound, the evident *grumpishness* of his elder brother (it is an undignified word to use, in regard to a person of Mr. Luttrell's character and standing in society ; but, on his own principle of calling things by their right names, we shall leave it uncorrected)—the grumpishness, then, of the head of all the Luttrells, tended,

on the whole, to encourage rather than check the titillation of spirits which Mr. Francis was visibly enjoying.

He had been living a quiet life—some of his contemporaries thought it even a stupid life—for some years previous to the present era: immersed in the pursuit of elegant or scientific literature, the education of his children, and the mismanagement of his gentlemanly little farm. Smooth had been the tenor of his existence; and, upon the whole, safe as well as satisfactory. Now, within the lapse of little more than six weeks, behold in how very different a position he stands: still more satisfactory to himself, perhaps, but not altogether so safe. No longer verging on superannuation, and aiming at nothing beyond the respectabilities of life, he hears himself hailed as a man of gallantry, and reprimanded by his elder brother for weaknesses, the suspicion of which he had believed himself to have quite outlived.

For a gentleman of fifty-eight, it was a startling change; and, though the character of Mr. Francis must suffer by the admission, I must needs say he was not a little gratified by the turn things were taking, and by the fact of his being supposed liable to fall a victim to the tenderest of passions: at least of being accused of a flirtation with a beautiful woman, young enough to be his daughter. “It was Pickering, no doubt, that had spread the silly report.” Yet, strange to say it, the little man was not on that account denounced, as he should have been, as a gossip and a mischief-maker. No, his failing was regarded as venial, and even calculated

to heighten the amusement of a select circle of friends, and keep off the stagnation of domestic life.

What further thought might be fostered and encouraged in the mind of Mr. Francis Luttrell by this conversation, or where his meditations pointed in the course of that walk to Rundell and Bridge's, it is not for us to determine. With the reflections of the young and idle, an author may take any liberties, and disclose very much whatever he pleases ; but it ought, surely, to be otherwise, when the subject of our literary tattling is a gentleman who has passed his grand climacteric. With such an individual, love is, or ought to be, a very serious matter ; and if, instead of thus reverently regarding it, the good man smiles and smirks in the very fashion of Malvolio, all the while he is making merry with the wise counsels of his elder brother—if he points his toes and skips over a kennel with unaccustomed agility ; is oblivious to the near approach of man or beast, and after being sworn at by a couple of porters, and slightly admonished by a fishwoman, if he chance to finish his career of wrong-headedness by running foul of a donkey-cart—what is to be done in a case of this peculiar nature, but to treat him as we would our own grandfather—draw a reverend veil over his eccentricities, and, if he be really under the influence of monomania for the time being, wish him in all sincerity an early and entire restoration to his better reason.

Ere he had made his way from the west-end of London, Mr. Francis fell in with divers of his acquaintances whom civility compelled him to salute ; though it was plain by his absent manner that he

would rather have pursued his private reflections, whatever they were, without interruption. On one occasion, indeed, his friend being a family man, he was obliged to stop and inquire after the wife of his bosom and certain pledges of conjugal affection, too numerous to be particularized. At this point Mr. Francis meant his attentions to terminate, and was not prepared to have his friend turning back and walking with him citywards, in order to instruct him more leisurely in his domestic arrangements, and give him a minute description of the various degrees of hooping-cough which prevailed amongst his nine children, from the hobble-de-hoy sufferings of his eldest cub, to the milder symptoms of the baby in arms.

And when Mr. Francis found himself free from this annoyance, it was not long before he encountered his old relation Mr. Fothergill; who was waiting in his carriage at the door of what was then called a haberdasher's shop—the name is becoming fast extinct—where, at her particular desire, he had set down his sprightly torment, Fanny Marsham. Dreading a prosy colloquy with the old gentleman, Mr. Francis looked straight before him and quickened his steps; but he had not gone many paces past the carriage, when the footman followed him with his master's earnest request that he would step back and speak to him; so that, without absolute rudeness, he could not avoid the snare. He found Mr. Fothergill, as usual, full of nervous alarms; with a mysterious look at the ribbons dangling in the window before him. He told Mr. Francis that Miss Fanny had been in that

shop just half-an-hour and three minutes, and she only went in for a little bit of bobbin.

“Didn’t Mr. Francis think it rather singular?”

The gentleman referred to was decidedly of opinion there was no answering for the vagaries of young ladies from boarding-school.

“But,” said he, “if you are afraid of Fanny being run away with, why, my good sir, don’t you follow her and keep guard in person?”

We are really afraid that this forced detention at the door of that old family coach, must have somewhat injured the usually sweet temper of the junior Luttrell; so unfeelingly did he hold forth on Mr. Fothergill’s awful responsibility as temporary guardian to Mrs. Marsham’s youngest pet. He ended by counselling his old friend to be more on the alert; and the other, with the humility of one who is conscious that he does his duty but by halves, assured him that he should have made it a point to attend Miss Fanny everywhere: but he experienced some difficulty in walking.

“Indeed, sir! What! a touch of the gout?”

“Why, no, not quite so bad as that; but I have a corn, Mr. Francis—a troublesome corn on the little toe of my left foot;” and observing Mr. Francis inclined to smile at this excuse, the corn forthwith dilated to a bunion. “For Hoskins, who is very clever in these respects, and has great experience, thinks it probable it may turn to one, unless I take the greatest care to avoid inflammation. A bunion is a serious matter, Mr. Francis.”

“Certainly, sir: but still, if the alternative is to

be Fanny giving you the slip and running off to Gretna Green—" Maliciously was it said: Mr. Francis seemed bent on frightening his old friend to the utmost of his power.

Mr. Fothergill implored him not to hint at such a catastrophe; and with a lamentable glance at the shop door, begged, as a particular favour, that Mr. Luttrell would just step in and ascertain what had become of Miss Marsham. "Not that I would have her hurried," he added; "for she is apt to cry, unless she has everything her own way."

Mr. Francis, though somewhat reluctantly, agreed to do what was required of him. "But, upon my word," said he, "if Fanny has been coquetting all this while with those men milliners, I am afraid my interference will not be very well taken."

The remark increased Mr. Fothergill's discomposure to a pitiable extent.

"God bless me!" he asked, "was it possible? Did Mr. Francis really think that Miss Fanny, with her high notions, and talking so much about the army, would look with an eye of regard on a draper's apprentice?"

"Why, I would not willingly question the discretion of any young lady: though, I confess, I would be loth to answer for Fanny's; and I have noticed occasionally some handsome young fellows amongst these linendrapers, and mighty insinuating too, I assure you: skilful in more than the mysteries of their craft."

"Is that really your opinion, Mr. Francis?" said the old gentleman, looking anxiously in his face.

“Dear, dear! then there is no peace of mind for me anywhere while that young lady is under my roof! I have always been on my guard against the military gentlemen who have accosted her. Two Blues, Mr. Francis, in the park the other day, and a marching regiment in Piccadilly.”——Mr. Francis stared in his turn, but perceived that his friend was becoming too agitated to be quite coherent. “But, bless me! I thought that when I had put her into a shop, she was as safe amongst the ribbons and laces as if she had been sitting by my side; and safer too, perhaps: but now my eyes are opened—my eyes are opened, and I must take more care for the future. Yes, I fear I have been remiss: but you don’t think, Mr. Francis—you don’t really think now, that Miss Fanny would condescend to a haberdasher? Not quite a haberdasher, surely? No, no—I can’t believe it.”

His friend, by way of reply, directed Mr. Fothergill’s attention to one of the shopmen, who had just emerged with a parcel, which he delivered to the footman.

“There, sir,” said Mr. Francis, “there is a fair sample of the race in question—a most satisfactory specimen, indeed! Where would you desire to see a brisker young fellow, or one more evidently on the alert to please his fair customers? Observe him, I beseech you! See the inimitable air with which he beckons old John, and directs him to stow away his precious wares—that ‘bit of bobbin,’ no doubt, which Fanny has been so long selecting.”

The colour rushed to Mr. Fothergill’s face with apoplectic violence, and grasping the hand of his

friend, as it rested on the carriage window, he whispered—"Why, bless my heart! it's the very same man—the identical hosier's boy—that called at my house two days ago!"

"Your house, sir?"

"Yes, yes—I assure you, Mr. Francis, it is a fact. I know him again—it's the very same—he called with a parcel of gloves to be approved of by Miss Fanny; and there they were, my good sir, I don't know how long, fitting them on together in the housekeeper's room. Hoskins, of course, was present: yet my mind misgave me—I own it did—for between ourselves, Mr. Francis—you won't let it go any further—Hoskins told me afterwards (she thought it her duty to tell me), in confidence, that when the man was gone, Miss Fanny asked her opinion of the colour of his eyes; and even, my good friend, lowered her dignity so far as to wish that his whiskers had been a shade darker!"

"Well, they are certainly rather of the reddest—Fanny's right enough in that respect."

"Oh, Mr. Francis! This is not a matter for idle jesting. I must write to my cousin Marsham; or do something that may rid me of this awful responsibility: I must, indeed! And then to think of my culpable indiscretion in permitting her to come again to this shop, or any other shop!" And the old gentleman, growing desperate as it seemed, called John to let him out; declaring, in the abandonment of his anxiety, that he must follow her wherever she went, even at the risk of being lamed for life.

But before he could get under weigh, Miss Fanny

made her appearance from the shop; he of the whiskers being still in attendance: and it must be confessed that the smiling on one side and smirking on the other—not to speak of the very gracious inclination with which the young lady wished her slim and dapper attendant “good-morning,” and jumped into the carriage—was but little likely to restore Mr. Fothergill’s equanimity: especially as she finished her frisky manœuvres by treading on his suffering toe. Then giddily begging pardon, and promising to tread upon the other next time, she addressed herself to Mr. Francis, across the old gentleman.

All the while the latter kept pouring his griefs into the ear of his friend; though in a voice so low, lest it should reach the subject of all his complaints, that Mr. Francis could distinguish little beyond the words—“Miss Fanny—gloves—chicken-pox—bunnion—Hoskins—bit of bobbin—little toe—and red whiskers.”

CHAPTER V.

TRUE to the resolution he had formed in a moment of unwonted discretion, Captain Romilly forbore seeking the society of the Carews for the two following days. Whether the heiress of Curzon-street found him a more agreeable companion for this mental arrangement of his may be doubted. As for Selby and her mother—as they had looked for no particular attention from him, and were occupied with subjects of far more importance to them than his movements—his absence passed unnoticed by them; but it was otherwise with Carew: to him, their intimacy with the young officer was a matter of some interest; for he had lately been in the habit of winning a little of Romilly's money at billiards—a game in which he had considerable skill; and on such occasions (he was prudent enough not to repeat them too often) the facility with which the captain had parted with what was so infinitely dear to the extravagant and ever needy Carew, had given him hopes of deriving still further benefit from his military friend in a pecuniary way.

His wife, since the explosion of this unlucky affair at Plymouth, had become impracticable; and, though she treated him indulgently, was, he could plainly

perceive, continually on her guard. In fact, Mrs. Carew had begun to fear that her husband had never been candid with her in his account of that transaction; and she believed that he was carrying on at that very time some secret communication with the odious Mrs. Bradshaw. The slight degree of confidence, therefore, which she had ventured to place in him and his final improvement, was sinking fast; and as she was too sincere to hide the anxiety and distrust which were embittering every moment of her life, he had little hope of being able to gratify his extravagant propensities from her resources. But Romilly, with his great expectations, was such fair game: young, careless, open-hearted, and, what was more to Carew's purpose, open-handed, and ever ready to serve a friend; why it would be culpable ingratitude, and a slighting of Fortune's favours, to allow him to escape unfleeced.

The particular story, nevertheless, which was to open the heart of Captain Romilly still wider, and induce him to lend Mr. Carew a trifle of fifty pounds or upwards, was not yet settled in the fertile invention of that high-spirited gentleman; but he guessed that something in the sentimental line would go farthest with his young friend—an interesting allusion, if possible, to the fair sex: and for this he trusted to his own inimitable powers—his quick imagination and readiness at seizing each circumstance of the moment, and adapting it to fit the purpose he had in perspective.

His wife being actually on the spot, there was no possibility of killing or burying her; as had been done

so profitably in the case of his noble kinsman in Grosvenor Square: and Carew smiled saucily as he recalled that happy *ruse*—that stratagem so well conceived, and skilfully effected! while his mystified Charlotte, looking up to him with her usual expression of kind forbearance and strong suspicion, asked him what it was that made him look so pleased. Poor woman! she knew by report Lord Elderton to be a very liberal nobleman; but she little guessed the handsome sum he had contributed towards the expenses of her funeral! Though so thoughtless was Carew, and so blind to consequences in the midst of his deepest scheming, that, for the sake of a joke so amusing to himself, he was often on the point of telling her the whole story.

But to return to his designs upon Romilly: it was rather provoking to the agreeable John to lose sight of his intended victim; just at that particular time, too, when he had reckoned securely that the vicinity of his ladies would have drawn the young man oftener than ever into his society. As this, however, was by no means the only subject that occupied the busy mind of Carew, Romilly's apparent coolness was suffered for the present to pass unheeded; and it was some days before he made an attempt to improve his acquaintance.

When they did meet, it was not in Maddox-street, but in a coffee-house in Pall Mall; where Romilly and many an idle young fellow, like himself, were in the habit of lounging away their time. His time had lately been much devoted to Miss Drake, who was rendered more cross and suspicious than usual from having failed

to discover anything more concerning the fair lodger at Mrs. Dawes's: for, true to her notions of dignity and decorum, she scorned any direct questioning of the captain himself, and Fanny Marsham's co-operation had as yet done little towards elucidating the mystery. Once, indeed, on meeting Mr. Francis Luttrell, she had approached the subject; but he was no mischief-maker, and easily perceiving the jealous fears that prompted her in introducing the name of his lovely cousin—believing also that, as concerned young Romilly, she had only too great cause for entertaining them—he had ingeniously evaded the subject, without affording her the precise information she wanted; and from that day had studiously shunned her society.

The perplexed Sophia was never, therefore, easy when the captain was *out* of her sight; and as he was never at ease when he was *in* it, their intercourse, spite of all his prudent resolutions, grew every day more unsatisfactory. An hour or two of comparative liberty, viz. the indulgence of looking as thoroughly miserable as he really felt, was all he could reckon on: then he must return to dine at Curzon-street, and attend Miss Drake and Lady Sarah to a rout. Before the Peace, such things were not called "*soirées*:" they were quite as stupid, but were designated "*routs*;" and from this insipid occupation of his evening he knew there was no reprieve.

Meanwhile, there he sat in that snug retreat ccleped a club-room; where, safe from female intrusion—safer far than in the island of St. Senanus, or on the rock of St. Kevan—man, in the acknowledged supe-

riority of his nature, gracefully relaxes in rational discourse with the masculine minds around him; or follows out any other species of training that may serve to enliven his wit, and ennoble those higher faculties which shall have suffered deterioration in the company of women.

Of course we must here be understood to describe the general character of club-house frequenters, and not the individual, Charles Romilly; for he, poor fellow! sat there weary of his morning's work, with a crushed heart, and a temper worn to that attenuated state that I have heard old women term "fiddle-strings." Yes, old women: in the face of what is written above, I shrink not from quoting them; and considering the nature and consistence of catgut, and its tremulous vibrations, so analogous to the shaking of the nerves, hence communicated to the temper, I assert the phrase to be singularly descriptive of such a state of mind as the captain's. And though no old woman *may* intrude, so much as the extremest tip of her nose, into any one of the club-rooms in any one portion of the United Kingdom; yet the very oldest and ugliest of the tribe may be found occasionally to hit the right nail truly and forcibly on the head.

With a languid expression our gallant friend listened, or seemed so to do, to the meagre chat and gossip of the day, which was passing between two of the silliest men of his acquaintance: rare exceptions, of course, to the common run of club-men. In a happier mood, Romilly would soon have tired of their company, but now it was a matter of indifference to

him : it was preferable, at all events, to that he had lately left.

It did not escape the quick apprehension of Carew, that, although when he entered the room, Romilly started up to receive him with all his accustomed friendliness, there was, notwithstanding, a something in his address amounting almost to embarrassment—a nervous, hurried manner, quite unlike anything he had ever seen him display till then: more especially was this change observable, when he asked after the health of the ladies in Maddox-street. But whatever might be the private surmises of Carew, he strove by the ease and apparent carelessness of his own address, to restore the composure of his friend; and when the other, with the same conscious hesitation, began to excuse his remissness in calling upon them, on the plea of pressing business, cousin John immediately, and that in the most natural manner possible, laid it all on his devotion to Miss Drake. “Of course every moment of his time was due to her; and her alone: his pleasure, no less than his duty, lay all in that quarter.”

“Oh! by Jove!” cried one of the young men—he was, perhaps, rather the greatest fool of the two—“it would be no joke to affront a woman who drives such an equipage as that of Miss Drake’s: the carriage is the most perfect thing in London; and as for the horses, I don’t believe there’s such another turn-out to be met with!”

The other expressed himself with corresponding energy on this interesting topic, and much to the same effect; except that he found a little fault with

the shape of the coachman's wig. "I happened to meet it not long ago," said he.

"What! the wig?"

"No, the carriage, just turning the corner of Maddox-street."

"What could it be doing there?" said Romilly, quickly.

"Going to the milliner's, perhaps," said Carew: "Madame Fleury, that great high priestess of the mysteries of the toilette—the art of making old women look young, and plain ones pretty—the all-sufficient Madame Fleury lives just opposite to our lodgings."

Poor Romilly! how his heart thrilled at these two simple words, "our lodgings."

"By-the-bye, Romilly," said the first gentleman (for so in a list of our *dramatis personæ* would this speaker be classed), "what are the new liveries to be?"

"Oh, what does it signify, Edgecombe?" said the unhappy being he addressed; and he spoke in a voice of utter uneasiness. "My good fellow, if you had heard as much about them as I have, and been as often appealed to, you would have been sick of the subject long ago. Heaven knows what they are to be! sky-blue turned up with yellow, perhaps: it's all one to me."

"Why, Romilly, you're not quarrelling with your good luck already? I only wish you would make it over to me, that's all! Wouldn't I know something of my own stud, and the colour of my own liveries?"

"No doubt of it! And every curl in your coachman's wig!"

There was such an unnecessary degree of bitterness in Romilly's manner, that the politic Carew thought it as well to interfere; with the observation that their mutual friend, like a child at a feast or a fly in a honey-pot, was only sated with sweets—merely overwhelmed with the sense of his approaching felicity.

To this, the second gentleman responded, "That, at all events, if *he* were lucky enough to stumble upon an heiress of so many thousands a year, he wouldn't look sulky about it." And then they sauntered out of the room; their shuffling gait and loud laughter seeming, as they moved away, to jar upon the irritable nerves of Captain Romilly; for he knitted his brows like some agonized connoisseur, who hears perforce a chorus of the million.

Not a look, not a gesture, escaped the notice of Carew; whose ulterior views were merged for the present in pure curiosity. He knew already that Romilly admired his daughter, and all but detested Miss Drake; but until now he had never guessed how fervent were both these inclinations. Something more he resolved to elicit before he parted with his companion; but, for the moment, the wily John hesitated upon the course to be adopted: which of these opposite sentiments should he work upon, so as best to open the heart he was desirous of probing?

Romilly was the first to speak; for as the door closed upon those two walking gentlemen, and the cackle of the geese grew hushed in the distance, he burst into an eulogium on the merits of silence and solitude in certain dispositions of the mind. "Though it is odd that we should covet it," he continued, "for it is pre-

cisely in such seasons that calm reflection is the least palatable to us !”

“Nay, nay !” exclaimed the other, in a tone of banter—which, if it had not issued from the mouth of a Carew, would have sounded very dissonantly to his friend : “such Jeremiads are all very well for three-fourths of the world; but *you* Romilly—you who have all the pleasures of life within your very grasp. But pardon me,” he added, changing his battery, and speaking in a more feeling tone, “I may possibly be talking of what I do not understand, for we all know there must be a wrong side to every picture: bright colours well smoothed with oil on one side, and rough canvass on the other. Of course to me, in common with all who see no farther than the surface of things, your position seems peculiarly enviable: and, perhaps, after all, it is only now that some trifling matter has gone wrong with you, and caused a momentary discontent with your lot. In sober earnest, Romilly, you know as well I do, how few there are in this good world of ours, who would not leap mast high to change places with you.”

“Would to Heaven, I could give them the choice !”

“Why, my good fellow !” cried Carew, in his apparently frank, good-natured tone, “what is the meaning of all this ? It’s midsummer madness with a vengeance. If any poor devil like me, for instance, were to give way to such megrims, there might be some excuse for it.”

“*You*, Mr. Carew ?”

“Yes, *I*, Captain Romilly. The sport of For-

tune for many a long year, with my hair prematurely grey, and so few of the good things of this life to boast of. If I, indeed, were to turn grumbler——”

“You!”—it was spoken with a touch of Romilly’s old enthusiasm: “You would not have the shadow of an excuse. Poor in pocket you may be, or in the estimation of such men as those who just left us; but you are rich, incalculably rich, in all that is most desirable: you have priceless gifts, such as no money can command!”

Carew, pausing for a moment upon this burst, added thoughtfully, “Why yes! I do possess, as you truly say, some more than ordinary blessings. With *such* a wife as mine!”

“And *such* a daughter!” sighed Romilly, interrupting the oration, exactly as Carew expected.

“My daughter?” repeated the latter innocently: “what! Selby? Ah, poor girl! Yes, she is, indeed, a treasure to me; such (I think I may say) as any father might be proud of. But, still she is an anxiety to me, Captain Romilly—a great anxiety! for the higher we prize our possessions, the more uneasy we must be about their ultimate destiny. And Heaven knows what may become of that dear girl when I am gone!”

In a less exalted state of mind, Romilly would have seen through the flimsiness of this attempt at pathos; and if any other topic had produced it, he might have reminded Mr. Carew, that he was not likely to be “going” yet: but the image of Selby banished every notion of jesting from

the mind of her enthusiastic adorer. Rising as he spoke, and looking up with all the fire of his intelligent countenance, he continued in the same strain:—

“And what should become of her? What but good can befall a creature so excellent: so perfect in the innocence and simplicity of her charming nature, that, like the lady in *Comus*, she might make her habitation with the wicked and still remain safe—unspotted and blessed?”

“Ah, but then her beauty! her beauty, my young friend!” exclaimed Carew, “Perhaps I overrate it—you may very possibly accuse me of a father’s partiality; but still I think you will allow that she is generally admired:—you have seen enough of the impression she makes in general society, to agree with me, that——”

“Too much! too much have I seen of her!” cried the young man wildly: “a great deal too much for my own peace of mind!” Then, without further reflection, he went on—“Oh, Mr. Carew! if you knew how I admire—how in my inmost heart I worship that lovely daughter of yours! You think me mad; but I cannot help it: it’s my destiny. I am fated to atone for the rashness of a moment in an eternity of repentance! And remember this is no idle passion; but a sentiment that has existed for years. I saw her first five years ago, and loved her from that very moment!”

Carew’s stare of surprise at this burst of feeling, was for once sincere and unaffected; for though he had pretty well guessed how the matter really lay, he

had not calculated on so immediate and frank a declaration.

“My child!” he exclaimed; “my daughter, Selby!”

“Yes, yes, your child! your beautiful Selby: the sweetest and loveliest of human beings!”

“And you were struck with her at first sight?” pursued Carew.

“Yes; I doated on her from the instant our eyes first met.”

Then, as if speaking more to himself than his companion, Mr. Carew murmured in a low but not indistinct voice, “God bless me! What a wonderful coincidence!”

“What is a coincidence?” asked Romilly, struck with the expression: “what do you mean by coincidence?”

“Oh—nothing—nothing,” said Carew, assuming the manner of one who feels he has been inadvertent, and tries to dismiss a dangerous subject: “in fact, your unexpected disclosure, Captain Romilly, has so shaken and startled me, that I am hardly master of myself—it is altogether so strange—so—so totally unlooked for!”

“But,” persisted the other, in whom a sudden hope had been awakened. “You uttered the word coincidence as connected with me—and the subject we were upon.”

“No, no,” said Carew, “you mistook the word: or if I did use it, it was spoken in haste, and most unadvisedly. We’ll think no more of it;” then holding out his hand, he said with much apparent feeling,

“farewell, my young friend, I would rather not have known your secret; but believe me it will be sacredly kept—farewell, and God bless you!” And seizing his hat he was on the point of departing, when Romilly detaining him, exclaimed in a voice that really shook with suppressed emotion,—“No, Mr. Carew, you must not, indeed. Upon my soul, you must not leave me unsatisfied!”

“Not leave you, Romilly?” He gave a look of grave surprise, which relaxed, however, to an indulgent smile, as, shaking the hand that was laid upon his arm, he said, “My good fellow, what crotchet has entered your head now? I really must be off, for I have a particular engagement elsewhere.”

“If you had a hundred, you should not go yet. No, Mr. Carew, from this spot you stir not till you have explained what has just fallen from you. That word coincidence—you used it as applied to your daughter and myself. Is it possible that there can exist any mutual interest—any reciprocal—is it?—can it be? oh, Carew!” he stopped; but his eager expression left no doubt of the question he dared not utter.

“Captain Romilly,” said Carew, “to be frank with you, I did use the word you mention, but it slipped from my lips in an unguarded moment; and I feel confident you are too much a man of honour to take advantage of what was so purely unintentional. You would not wish me—no, Romilly, I am sure you would not urge me to betray the secret of any female heart, much less that of the being I hold most dear upon earth. No; Heaven forbid that I should

be induced by any consideration to violate the sacred confidence of my child !”

“ You have her confidence, then ?” said Romilly, ready to seize on the slightest hint that might seem to favour his hopes. “ She tells you all her thoughts—does she ?—does she, indeed ?”

“ Captain Romilly,” said Carew, with an expression of paternal tenderness that might have edified a much less credulous auditor, “ I glory in the conviction, that there is not an emotion in the breast of my dear girl which she would conceal from me !”

“ And there *is* a secret ?” cried Romilly, still holding him tightly ; “ something referring to—perhaps to me ?—a likeness—a similarity of sentiment—coincidence ! that was the expression—Carew !” and his impatience grew intolerable. “ Carew ! for Heaven’s sake, what did you mean by that ?”

“ Excuse me, excuse me—on this point my lips must be sealed,” was, however, the only answer he could extort from cousin John ; who, having gone a little further than he had originally contemplated, was now rather alarmed at the spirit he had raised, and grew anxious to shuffle out of the magic circle, without being throttled outright. All he intended in making use of his daughter’s name was to obtain a certain influence over her impetuous admirer ; and having effected this purpose, with a dexterity of which he was internally proud, he was desirous that Selby should be no further compromised. But Romilly, young, powerful, and perfectly in earnest, was not easily to be foiled ; and it was fortunate for Carew that the entrance of two or three strangers ren-

dered the room no longer a fit place for tender confidences.

“Another time—some other time,” he whispered, trying to slip away.

“No, by Heaven! now or never!” was Romilly’s vehement rejoinder; and still, with a firm grasp, keeping Carew in tow, he made for a small room adjoining the public apartment, appropriated to those who wished to write letters or be private.

Again, however, Fortune befriended John Carew (we know how often she takes the side of the most unworthy of her votaries); for just as Romilly had thrust open the door and cousin John was asking himself, “what he should do to get out of the scrape without telling more lies than was necessary,” a voice like distant thunder growled out, “Why the devil, sir, can’t you come into a room without spoiling the lock and forcing the door off its hinges!” And Romilly, starting back, slammed the door to as quickly as he had opened it, explaining the matter in the emphatic whisper—“It’s my uncle, General Widdrington!”

“Thank you, for telling me,” said Carew, “for I thought it had been the polar bear;” and then, taking advantage of the sudden check thus given to Romilly’s impetuosity, he contrived to effect his escape, promising to see him again shortly.

Most men, not utterly wicked or besotted with their selfishness, would have reflected a little on the serious consequences that might ensue from such a scene as this; but Carew had, independently of any ulterior views, so much pleasure in the exercise of his inventive genius, that a conversation like that he

had just held with the deluded Romilly, gave him positive and keen enjoyment. On these occasions he never ceased regretting that he had not taken to the stage early in life: now his addiction to improvising would have stood seriously in the way of such a profession, as it is to be apprehended that Hamlet's advice to the players, not to speak more than is set down for them, would seldom have been attended to by Mr. Carew. Instead, therefore, of pausing to speculate on the possible mischief he might have been doing, he pursued his way with his usual carelessness; only exulting over his successful piece of acting, and the facility with which he had availed himself of the weak points in Captain Romilly's character.

From his youth upwards, Carew had lived for the present moment only; and in the autumn of his days, he was not more disposed to make provision for the exigencies which might arise from his unprincipled course of conduct. A very little more steadiness and capability of persevering in his own character, joined to his quick appreciation of those on whom he practised, would have made Carew a powerful agent for good or evil; but the penetration he possessed in no ordinary degree, was usually thwarted and rendered of slight avail through the radical defects of his own nature—the laziness that would take no trouble beyond the requirements of the day, and that inveterate selfishness which made him callous to every consideration that did not seem immediately to affect his own condition.

It was his present object to win or borrow a few pounds from young Romilly, and in the prosecution

of this scheme he never contemplated the embarrassment he might be preparing for himself as well as his daughter: in fact, so far as Selby was concerned, he never doubted her perfect readiness to supplant Miss Drake; if she had the opportunity. A little anxiety did certainly occur to him in the course of that ensuing evening; but it was merely as to whether his victim had really gorged the bait so skilfully thrown to him; and when, subsequently, he beheld Captain Romilly enter their little drawing-room, with a face whose animated pleasure bore not a single trace of the morning's despondency, a sort of placid content diffused itself through the frame of Carew. He looked upon the little group surrounding him, as puppets, whose motions it was his province to guide and influence: but still it was in a spirit of benevolence that he thus regarded them; and while his own private plans were in actual progress, he exerted himself with the utmost alacrity to amuse the passing hour, and render the development of those schemes as agreeable to all parties as possible.

On this evening, Romilly would have been, however, better satisfied, had Selby accorded him rather more personal attention, and not been so very much engrossed with letter writing at that little table apart in a corner of the room; but after the thrilling discourse he had so lately held with her father, his sanguine soul was not easily to be daunted. If the sweet frankness of her nature did not unfold itself to him in accordance with his secret wishes, she appeared but the more excellent for her reserve. Situated as he was known to be with this detested

engagement, what woman, save the basest of coquettes, would or could give him encouragement? Yet still, as he acknowledged this, he waited and watched in feverish impatience, for some proof, however slight, of her peculiar regard. But to Selby, Captain Romilly, if he did not talk of her husband or Mrs. Hamilton, was no more than any other pleasant acquaintance; and he watched in vain: there was the courteous attention, the ready reply, all that on ordinary occasions content us with womankind; yet still not enough to convince him of the security of his happiness, or excite him to such a pitch of blissful frenzy as to break his faith with Miss Drake, and mortally affront his uncle.

Later in the evening the prospect brightened up. Carew, for certain purposes of his own, proposed a rubber at whist; and his daughter, though she tried to persuade the gentlemen that picquet would suit them best, left her writing-table, and cheerfully, if not willingly, consented to play. With her for a partner (for Carew took care that such should be the arrangement) Romilly had nothing more to desire, and was exactly in the state of mind to make the excellent John heartily wish that he, and not his wife, had to name the stake they were to play for.

Thus flew the laughing hours that had been lagging so lazily in the morning: he was not suffered to linger long in his paradise, for, besides that early hours were advocated by the ladies in Maddox-street, they happened to hear, by chance, that he had an engagement to fulfil on leaving them; and, even before it had struck ten, persisted in dismissing him, with

such a careful attention to his supposed inclinations, that he could hardly believe it to be free from covert sarcasm. He went off on the whole, therefore, with spirits invigorated to endure the contrast that must be awaiting him elsewhere; and Carew—who professing to sleep the better for previous exercise, took his arm as far as his uncle's, where Romilly was to dress for the party—returned also in a very blithe state of mind.

So great indeed was the self-satisfaction visible in Mr. Carew's countenance and manner, that one might almost have fancied that he had gained some favourite end, some rather important advantage, by accompanying Captain Romilly home that night; but as the discourse they pursued by the way thither never transpired, it is impossible for us to be particular on this point. It may, however, be worth remarking, that in his progress to bed, including the time he took to light his candle and dance a reel with his daughter and a couple of chairs, Mr. Carew whistled or sang a variety of tunes; but certainly that which ran most continually in his head, and with which he made his final march up stairs, was verse the second of Alley Croker.

CHAPTER VI.

THE little family in No. 12, Maddox-street, humouring the lazy habits of its lord and master, were always late in despatching the business of breakfast ; for instead of the proverbial dulness that hangs over the matin meal, Carew's gossiping propensities rendered it a pleasant and cheerful employment enough, and an appropriate introduction to the loitering sort of life they were now leading. It was therefore past twelve o'clock ere Mr. Carew, equipped for the more serious occupations that might fall in his way, and having seen his wife and daughter depart on a shopping expedition, left his lodgings also ; yet lingered for a moment or two to say a few civil words to his good-humoured hostess, and turned back when he had bidden her good-day, to hint that the broiled chicken which he had overheard his wife ordering for dinner, was nothing at all to the purpose without mushroom sauce. And even as they thus communed on the door-step, a carriage, irreproachably complete in all its appointments, passed, and drew up at the milliner's opposite.

“ Miss Drake, I declare ! ” said Mrs. Dawes ; “ and

who has she got with her? Lady Sarah, I suppose: yes, and there's a young lady besides. I'll lay any money they are come to worry poor madame about those wedding bonnets. My cousin Jane tells me in confidence (she had it from Miss Drake's own maid) that there has been such to-does about those wedding-clothes and things, it's almost the death of poor old Lady Sarah, Jenny says: but of course you know, sir, it must go no further; only Briggs, that's my lady's-maid herself, she tells Jane that if ever there was an old lady snubbed of a constant continuance all day long, it is her old mistress. Perhaps, though, they are not going to alight after all, only leave a message. Yes; they are, I declare. La! sir, they won't expect to meet the captain over the way: do you think they will?"

"Captain! what captain?" said Carew, quickly.

"Dear me, Mr. Carew, what captain should I mean, but Miss Drake's own beau, Captain Romilly? Didn't you know that he joined your ladies as they went out just now? He was coming here to call, and just as he had his hand on the knocker—indeed he did give a sort of a knock, and thinking it might be the butcher, who was to come with a little bit of gravy beef, I popped my head out of the second floor window; for I wanted to give him a message about that shoulder of lamb, and then I saw who it was. And so, sir, just as the captain's hand was on the knocker, your ladies came out; and then I heard them say they were going shopping, and something about Madame Fleury's; and they walked over the crossing, and went in together, the captain as well as

the ladies. Some milliners calling themselves respectable, wouldn't like to have a gentleman hanging about their show-rooms, and staring, no doubt, at the 'prentice girls; but Madame Fleury is no ways particular: in fact, I have heard something relating to that little side-door of hers, that leads into — street: but as I shouldn't like to stand in a white sheet at the church-porch, I take care never to repeat those kind of stories."

"And you are sure, Mrs. Dawes, that your friend the captain went over the way with my fair ones? And you think he is there still?"

"Why, sir, I can't say for positive that he is; but it's only a few minutes since that I came away from the window up-stairs, and up to that time I know he was there."

For a moment Carew stood, fixing a sharp glance on the opposite house; then, as if resolved, he said, "Well, Mrs. Dawes, don't forget the mushrooms;" and with the straightness, if not quite the swiftness, of a dart, he also made his way into the milliner's.

With all his nonchalance and love of mischief for mischief's sake, he was struck with the seriousness of the present dilemma; without being aware of the extent to which Miss Drake's jealousy had already been moved on his daughter's account, Carew knew enough of that lady, or any other lady under her circumstances, to feel convinced that the sight of her engaged lover in close attendance on a very pretty girl, must be most irritating.

The catastrophe, however, seemed inevitable; and his inveterate curiosity, independently of any deeper

consideration, urged the lively John to witness the event of the meeting, which he concluded to have actually taken place.

“Poor Romilly!” said he to himself, “his fun is pretty well over by this time: even with my valuable assistance, he will hardly be able to weather such a storm as this.”

Making use of Miss Drake’s name, Carew was suffered to proceed through the shop (if any part of Madame Fleury’s elegant establishment could receive that vulgar denomination), and was ushered to the show-rooms above; where to his surprise, and a little to his relief, he found that no dangerous collision, such as he had confidently anticipated, had as yet taken place.

Miss Drake, with her aunt and Fanny Marsham, were, besides the attendant milliners, the only occupants of the room into which he was admitted. Concluding upon this, that either Mrs. Dawes had made some egregious error in her calculations from the second floor observatory, or that his ladies, having found nothing at madame’s to their mind, had proceeded to some other “fripperie,” Carew was enabled to assume in reality, as well as seeming, that gentlemanly ease and modest assurance, for which he was so justly distinguished.

Begging a thousand pardons for venturing into a region sacred to matters wholly and intensely feminine, he went on paying his compliments to the ladies. He had recognised Lady’s Sarah’s carriage, and could not resist the temptation of inquiring after her and Miss Drake’s health in person; though well he

knew all the while he was transgressing into, what ought to be to him and the rest of his unworthy sex, a land unknown and unapproachable. Lady Sarah did her best to reassure him, and repay his civilities by compliments no less gracious, on the excellence of his taste in female attire, especially bonnets (the Tilney hat at that very moment on the old lady's head): a gentleman who understood so well what was and was not becoming, could not possibly be *de trop* at Madame Fleury's *magasin des modes*.

"Sophy, love, don't you agree with me that we ought to have Mr. Carew's opinion?"

But things had altered considerably since their last meeting. In the eyes of Miss Drake, the father of Selby Carew had become an object of suspicion; and her reception of him was barely civil. Carew perceived at a glance that he had sunk in the heiress's good graces, and pretty truly divined the cause; but preserving his own equanimity as the surest way of restoring hers, he turned to the little Marsham, and greeted her as an old acquaintance.

Fanny, with one eye on the wedding finery and the other watching Mr. Carew's lodgings from a window behind her (for Miss Drake had taken care to point out to her that suspicious habitation), was a truly happy person; thoughts of intrigue and Mechlin lace commingling in her heart, "lovers false and maids forsaken," French gauze and silver ribbons. These were precious moments, affording matter for divers letters to dear friends at Latham House, and bearing sweet remuneration for the dolour dreed in Great George-street. She made many inquiries

after Selby; explained how it happened that she had not yet been able to call upon her:

“For she is staying over the way? Isn’t she, Mr. Carew?”

And then the little bridesmaid, addressing her sulky principal (it was doubtful whether she was incited by sympathy or mischief) said,—

“You’ll like to call with me, won’t you, Miss Drake? I know you want to be introduced to my cousin.”

But Miss Drake haughtily exclaimed, — “Her time was so fully occupied, it would be quite impossible.”

“Oh, yes,” interposed the civil Lady Sarah; “dear Sophia has so much to do. But some future time, Mr. Carew, my niece and I shall be delighted to know more of your family.”

Sophy looked spitefully at her aunt; but before she had time to be rude, Carew, whose business he considered it to smooth down all inequalities, was prepared to handle the theme judiciously.

“Of course, during the present crisis—”

Here Carew, whose quick eye had long ago observed that there was another room for the display of finery, opening out of that they occupied; and whose ear, no less quick, had distinguished certain familiar voices proceeding from its half-closed folding door, began to speak a little louder.

“In the present propitious course of events,” he repeated blandly, but audibly, “his little family could not expect the honour of being noticed by Lady Sarah Wigram or Miss Drake—in fact, at any period.”

And here was an assumption of humility as studied as could be consistent with the demeanour of a perfect gentleman,—“They (the Carews) being mere lodgers in this gay town, and, for the present, adopting so simple a style of living, could neither expect nor flatter themselves,——”

But then the old lady broke in with more civil speeches, and Fanny vowed that, whether Mr. Fothergill accompanied her or not, she should make a point of calling soon.

“Soon then it must be, Miss Marsham,” replied Reynard the Fox; “for unless the visit is paid within the next two days, I am afraid there is little chance of my daughter having the pleasure of seeing you. We think of leaving London very shortly.”

“Indeed!” said Miss Drake, brightening visibly at this information, while Fanny expressed her sorrow.

“That was making but a very short stay,” Lady Sarah said.

And the heiress, allowing her aunt’s remark to pass graciously uncontradicted, Carew perceived his advantage, and went on to improve it accordingly.

“Why, we are none of us partial to a London life,” said he, in that calm, philosophical tone that would have deceived the very god of lies himself, had Mercury been in presence: “my wife is never happy long away from the country.”

“Well, but your daughter, Mr. Carew,” suggested Lady Sarah,—“your daughter, in the bloom of youth and beauty, as I am given to understand.”

Innocent old lady! Carew bowed in grateful acknowledgment of the observation, and Miss Drake

looked as if her fingers itched to “shy” some little portable article at the Tilney and the venerable head it surmounted.

“True, Lady Sarah: you speak with your usual judgment and amiable attention to the inclinations of young people. Most girls would be delighted with the gaieties of town, though the season is nearly at an end; and I have no doubt so would my Selby, under different circumstances.” At this point of his harangue, there came a giggle from the other room, and Mr. Carew was attacked with a little cough.

“But—I mention it in confidence—there is a tie which binds my daughter more intimately to the rural simplicity of her native home.” Then, drawing his chair nearer Miss Drake, he proceeded in a very insinuating though respectful manner: “You, Miss Drake, *you* know—if you will not be offended at my saying so—that where the treasure is, the heart will linger also.”

“Really? What! an engagement in the country?” said Lady Sarah. “How interesting, dear Sophy!”—She might well say so!—“Somewhere, perhaps, in the neighbourhood of—humph! Bath, I think is your place of residence?”

“Exactly so!” said Carew. “Your ladyship has connected circumstances with your usual discrimination.”

“Oh, Mr. Carew!” cried Fanny, “who is it? Who can it be? Is he an officer? Oh, do tell me!”

“Pardon me, my dear Miss Marsham; you shall be the first to know when the arrangement is declared

—but just now, for family reasons, we say nothing about it publicly: in fact, it is a more profound secret than such things generally are.”

“But I hope, Mr. Carew,” said the good-natured old lady,—“I hope it is an arrangement that meets your approbation and that of Mrs. Carew.”

“Entirely, Lady Sarah! The fondest parents could not desire a more apparently prosperous—ahem!”—here, his eye glancing across the folding door, he spoke in a distinct and exalted voice,—“a more appropriate allowance in all respects for their most beloved child. For we—I thank Heaven for it—have no wish to go beyond our station: we know what that is, and we are content to keep within it.”

“Why, as to that, my dear sir, your near connection with the Luttrels is quite sufficient to guarantee the respectability of your claims; even were your own name less distinguished for gentility.”

Nothing could contrast more strikingly with her late ungraciousness, than the earnest and almost simpering expression of poor Miss Drake, as she drank in every syllable of this fabrication—every drop of the soothing syrup of his words.

“Oh, Mr. Carew,” exclaimed Fanny, returning to the attack, “what is his name? Oh, do tell us! I shall never be easy till I know. Oh, what’s he like? Is he handsome? Is he tall? and what’s the shape of his nose? I am so particular about noses; and I am sure my cousin Selby would never endure a snub.”

“As for his person, my dear Fanny, that is a question for my daughter to decide: it is not for a matter-

of-fact old man like me to decide what may be attractive to your charming sex. Of course, Selby thinks him all perfection; and the happiest day of her life, poor girl, will be that in which she returns to his society."

"Oh, then, I have no doubt he is quite nice," said Fanny.

"Yes, a fine young man certainly—I believe I may say a remarkably fine young man—ahem—ahem!"

"La! what's that, I wonder," exclaimed Fanny: for she too had been struck with the masculine tones of a voice proceeding occasionally from the inner room; and, judging from the words, "good gracious!" and by the sharp look she suddenly turned upon Miss Drake, it would seem as if she had some vague idea that she had somewhere heard the voice before.

In the mean while, Mr. Carew's cough became so troublesome that Lady Sarah presented him with a lozenge from her bonbonnière; assuring him it was infallible for the species of cough he seemed to be suffering from.

"Whatever your ladyship condescends to administer must be a sure specific. Yes," coughing violently, "I have a severe cold hanging about me: draughts—it is carelessness and sitting in draughts that does it. If you'll allow me, I'll just close this door at my back."

The obsequious Madame Fleury hastened to shut it, and Fanny Marsham skipped from her seat for the same purpose; if, indeed, the movement was not dictated by some other motive: but Carew, who

happened luckily to be nearest the door, prevented them both.

“ Allow me, Miss Marsham,” said he : not for a moment laying aside his politeness.

One glance into the other room sufficed to show him—what, indeed, he fully expected to see—his daughter before a glass, trying on various bonnets which one of the girls presented her, while her mother stood by to censure or approve ; and Captain Romilly, half sitting half leaning on a table covered with millinery, pretended also to give his opinion : but, we fear, looked on more with the eye of a lover than a connoisseur. He had followed them into Madame Fleury’s under pretence of having a message to deliver to her from Miss Drake ; and Selby and her mother, though desirous to get rid of him—for they felt that his attendance upon them in such a place was highly unnecessary, if not actually improper—had not yet been able to effect his expulsion, without making the matter appear more serious than they wished it to be regarded.

Carew saw that their position was desperate. One short sentence in the captain’s ear would be worth any money ; but he dared not set foot in the inner room, for he knew that that tiresome Fanny would follow him immediately : all he could do, as he fumbled a little with the lock, was to cough loud enough to attract the attention of Romilly ; who luckily had his face turned towards him : the ladies were looking another way. He did so : fixed the captain’s eye for a single moment, and then, with a very expressive nod towards an opposite door (for

that room had two outlets), he closed the medium of communication between them.

"What's the matter?" said Mrs. Carew, observing Romilly's start of surprise, though she had not seen the cause of his emotion; but before he had time to reply, the answer was given by the little apprentice,—

"It was only the gentleman, ma'am, who came with the ladies in that room—Lady Sarah Wigram and Miss Drake."

"Oh, now then we shall see Miss Drake," said Selby, turning to Romilly with a smiling expression; which he would gladly have thought was all assumed.

"You don't know how curious mama and I are to see her."

Instead, however, of coming frankly forward to further this wish, Romilly hesitated, in evident confusion, and then replied, lowering his voice—

"I should have great pleasure in introducing her to you, but——" he paused and changed colour,— "this morning it happens that—— In fact, Miss Carew, it will not exactly do for me to be seen at this end of the town; for, you must know, I am supposed to be all this while at Doctors Commons, or in its smoky vicinity at least, overlooking some horrid parchments with my uncle and the lawyers."

"An appointment, Captain Romilly?" said Mrs. Carew, gravely; "then why are you here? Let me beg of you——"

"No, no, not an appointment: not exactly that," said he, trying to speak with indifference; "no sort

of appointment, I assure you: and for that matter, I give you my honour, they will do quite as well without my presence as with it—better too, perhaps. I believe I should be only in the way. Don't look so grave, my dear madam."

"It makes me grave, Captain Romilly," said Mrs. Carew, speaking low in her turn, that the little milliner might not hear what was said, "very grave, indeed, to hear you speak in this light way of a thing that concerns you so nearly."

"And your uncle?" urged Selby; "I have heard he is not a person to be trifled with."

The young man smiled bitterly.

"My presence amongst them is a form that may be easily dispensed with. I am a mere puppet, Miss Carew, in the hands of others: though, perhaps, they may find that I will be so no longer. Let them drive their sordid bargain without me. I will not go;" and he turned sullenly away to the window.

The ladies looked at each other uncomfortably.

"Make him go," whispered Selby to her mother.

But as soon as Mrs. Carew recommenced her remonstrances, he turned to them with forced vivacity, saying—

"Well, then, if it must be so, before I leave you, let me know which of the bonnets it is to be: let *me* choose for you! Shall I? I know you'll let me have my own way for once: God knows, now I get it but seldom! Let it be this one, and promise me it shall be trimmed with pink?"

Selby positively refused; for blue was Hartley's

favourite colour, and blue she was determined to have: for a tremulous hope, or fear—she hardly knew which to call the suffocating sensation—prompted her to believe that the trimming of that bonnet would not have quite faded before he would be seeing her in it.

“You recommend rose colour,” said she, trying to laugh off the earnestness of his manner, “and mama wants me to have primrose; and they say the fashion now is all for sea-green. Suppose, to reconcile all tastes, I have a bow of every colour in my bonnet.”

“Do!” said he; “and only appear in it, and there is not a woman in town who will not adopt the fashion. But, good-bye; I must linger no longer.”

“This is the way out, sir,” said the little apprentice, moving towards the folding door.

“No, I thank you,” said he, hastily stopping her, “I’ll go out here;” and he walked to the little door opposite to it.

“Oh, you can’t go that way, sir! that goes down the back stairs—that’s the back way out, sir.”

“So much the better, my dear: I am a modest man, and don’t like showing myself too much in public; so it will suit me exactly.”

He dashed off as he spoke, followed by the little milliner, who entreated him to let her at least shew him the way.

The Carews, thus left alone, looked at each other in open consternation.

“Selby,” said Mrs. Carew, “that young man is in love with you.”

"Heaven avert it!" said her daughter.

"I was struck with his manner last night," pursued the other; "and now the thing is but too clear."

"Oh, don't talk of it, mama: it would be horrible to think of! *His* friend, too!"

"We must discourage his visits for the future," said her mother. "I am only afraid I have been imprudent already: but who could have thought that a man actually on the point of marriage——Hush! here comes the young woman: settle about your hat, my love, and let us get away from here as soon as possible."

While matters were taking this striking turn in the inner room of Madame Fleury's, Carew, apprehensive lest, in spite of his highly judicious management, some awkward catastrophe might ere long ensue (for he could not make sure that Romilly would seize the hint he had attempted to convey to him), came speedily to the conclusion that he himself had better be off as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the departure must not be clownishly hurried. It was not in Carew's nature to bungle an affair of this sort; and in the course of the few minutes he allowed himself for leave-taking, he shewed his presence of mind by carrying on the plot he thought best adapted to the circumstances of the case. He took occasion briefly to express his uneasiness as to his young friend Captain Romilly's state of health.

"I do not know whether your ladyship has noticed it," said he, "but, to my thinking, he has been very much out of spirits lately."

“ Exactly what I have remarked to my niece. You remember, Sophy, love, my saying——”

“ Oh, yes, ma’am, you have been worrying me about it a great deal more than was necessary, or agreeable. As for the low spirits of young men,” haughtily bridling as she spoke, “ there are many things besides ill health to account for them.”

Upon this, Carew put on the half despondent, yet benevolent and placid look, which many a physician in West-end practice would be delighted to study.

“ Miss Drake is quite right,” said he: “ it is the mind which produces disorders like these ; and I am much mistaken if my poor young friend’s is not in a very dangerous condition, indeed.”

Miss Drake looked up at this with a surprised and startled expression ; for, at the moment, a wild idea occurred to her that the father of the fair Carew was actually on the point of revealing something that would confirm all her latent and worst suspicions.

It may be that that respectable gentleman penetrated her thoughts, for he proceeded straight to the point he was aiming at.

“ The fact is,” said he—speaking as if confidentially to the aunt, while he took excellent care that the niece should hear every word he uttered,—“ the fact is, he is worried: tormented out of his life, poor fellow, with those abominable lawyers ! day after day, and week after week ; and yet no perceptible progress is made. ‘ Long before this,’ as he said to me the other day—we had not met for some time, and happened by chance to encounter at the corner of Charing Cross, as I was strolling towards the Ad-

miralty, and he opened his mind to me on the subject ever uppermost in his thoughts,—‘ Long before now,’ said he, ‘ I flattered myself I should be in the possession of perfect happiness with the woman I adore ; but those confounded quill-drivers’—in short, our friend did use a much stronger epithet towards that learned profession than I choose to repeat. ‘ My patience,’ he said, ‘ is dwindling fast away ; I feel that my temper is not what it was, and if this excruciating suspense lasts much longer, even that angel in Curzon-street will get tired and disgusted with me : for ever am I urging these people to make haste’, (he is gone now into the City, I rather think) ‘ and nothing, said he, do I find done.’

“ This, I give you my word, is what he said to me ; and I think it right you should know it, my dear Lady Sarah, for your kind nature will prompt you to do all you can to soothe and console the poor young fellow. Believe me”—holding out his hand for a parting shake—“ his is a trial of no ordinary description ;” (here Carew threw a respectful look at the heiress) “ and our friend is not more of a philosopher on such an occasion than others of his sex. I only hope the struggle will not end in a serious fit of illness, that’s all ! I have known many a brain-fever result from a less serious cause. And now I must wish you a very good morning, and a happy conclusion of the all-important business which I have so unseasonably deferred.”

“ Oh ! but, Mr. Carew,” cried the old lady, “ we must have your opinion—positively, you must not run away without approving our choice : it is no

ordinary occasion. I must tell you (in a whisper—quite a whisper, you understand) that it is *the* bonnet that is under discussion. Even my dear Sophia's delicacy will allow my hinting as much ;" and, strange to say it, her dear Sophia did not for once contradict her.

Carew, trembling lest he should yet see the incautious trio enter the room, pleaded a tiresome appointment which must hurry him away ; but having cast his eyes critically over the head-gear, the satins, the silks, the chips, all virgin white—which, for private reasons of her own, Miss Drake preferred examining in Maddox-street, instead of having them brought home for inspection—as these unconscious candidates for the great honour of adorning the heiress's head on the bridal morning, were presented to him by the alert little Frenchwoman, he singled out one, "which, if I may be allowed to say so, is most undoubtedly the thing for Miss Drake."

Poor old Lady Sarah was charmed. "See how singularly our tastes accord ! That is my choice : I prefer it most decidedly. Sophy, love, if you will allow madame to try it on once more, I really think you will agree with me and our good friend, Mr. Carew."

Miss Drake declared it was a matter of perfect indifference to her : she might settle it to please herself, and have it all her own way.

For the last two months, at least, the venerable Wigram had not had so civil a speech addressed to her from that quarter ; and tears were actually standing in her eyes, as she fondly assisted the milliner to adjust the beautiful bridal-hat, with its snowy plume

and orange flowers, on the ungainly head of her niece. —Carew, congratulating himself on his consummate generalship, had taken his leave in the mean while, and was half-way down stairs; when he heard a voice calling him by name, and a moment after felt his arm seized by Fanny Marsham, with an earnest request that he would take her over the way to call upon his daughter. “Miss Drake says I may go for a little while, while she stays here” (poor thing! she was just then in too good a humour to refuse any favour that might be asked), “and I do so want to see my dear Miss Carew before she leaves town; and, perhaps, I shall get her to tell me a little about that gentleman you mentioned. Who knows but I may be bridesmaid a second time, before I go to school?”

Carew could now with truth aver that his ladies were not at home to receive their young cousin: they also were gone abroad shopping; he really could not say where.

Fanny lamented the fact. “I thought I had managed so nicely, and now it may be ages before I can come this way again. Oh, Mr. Carew, if you did but know what a dreadful time I have of it with old Mr. Fothergill! I had much sooner be at school again, and so I tell mama every time I write to her; but she does not mind me a bit: not the least morsel.”

Carew was now sufficiently at ease to pause a little, on the staircase leading down to the shop, and condole with his little cousin.

“So stupid we are!” proceeded Fanny, “for if we take a drive round the park, we go hours too early to see any company there, and come away just as the

gay carriages are driving in. Fancy our dining at four o'clock—we do, indeed: and never go out or see anybody but a few horrid old men and women, who knew Mrs. Fothergill when she was a little boy—no, I mean a little girl—or Mr. Fothergill when he was in his teens, or something of that sort. Oh, don't laugh, for I'm sure it will be the death of me, if I stay there much longer. But do you know, Mr. Carew—it *really* is an odd thing, but everything is old in Great George-street: the parrot died of old age the other day; and though she was quite as stupid as an owl, yet she was better than nothing, because one might tease her when nobody was by. Then the cat is too old to play with me."

Carew suggested that the animal in question might have been a kitten when Mr. Fothergill was a little girl—and Fanny, asserting that he was little better than an old woman now, subscribed to the remark with a hearty laugh. Carew, as we have seen, prided himself much on the skill with which he steered before the wind or tacked about, according to the navigation of the case; and when unable to rule the winds and waves as suited his purpose, he was wont, like Cæsar, to let his little bark drift quietly with the tide: trusting to his good fortune to lead it in safety, spite of lurking shoal or louring tempest. But Cæsar himself was dodged at last by his evil genius; and, clever as was the man to whom we have compared him, it was still possible that Madame Fleury's emporium of fashion and fripperie might, before he was fairly clear of it, prove another Phillippi to the wily John.

It so chanced that as Fanny Marsham and he thus joked together, they were standing on a landing-place close by a window which lighted the stairs from a side wall: for the milliner's was a corner house, its side looking into a narrow street; and Fanny, hearing voices beneath, or prompted alone, it might be, by that spirit of inquisitiveness which possessed her on all occasions, stretched her head out of the open window. This not unnatural, though very vulgar, propensity to looking out of windows, seems fated in Maddox-street to involve some mischievous result. Scarcely had she put out that little empty head of hers, than she drew it in again, with a stare and an exclamation,—“La! Mr. Carew, there's Captain Romilly just come out of this house!”

Alas! that wicked window overlooked the very back door referred to by Mrs. Dawes, and otherwise mentioned in the foregoing pages. Carew saw instantly how everything had happened; but regarding Fanny as an opponent easily to be matched, he boldly denied the fact.

“No,” said he, “it can't be Romilly, for I know he is gone into the City.”

“Oh, but it is though,” cried she. “Only look for yourself,” and she forced Carew to look out also. Romilly was just turning into Maddox-street, feeling certainly very small: scarcely like a man, and not at all like a gentleman; but still happily unconscious at that moment that his shabby mode of retreating was observed by any more dangerous witness than the little apprentice, his Ariadne in that labyrinth of back-stairs and cross-lights: and he had spent some

little time by the way in coaxing and bribing her to silence.

“Ha!” said Carew, “yes, I saw who you meant: a tall man with rather a fashionable style. Yes, a good-looking fellow, that I have noticed before about town. Dear me, what did General Walker call him? For it was the general who introduced him to me the other day: he belongs to their club, and a very gentlemanlike fellow he is; and as you say, Fanny, he certainly is a little like our friend Romilly, and the cut of the coat is exactly the same: probably they employ the very same tailor.”

“Well, if it’s not the captain, I never saw such a likeness before.”

“Ah, you would not say so if you saw his full face. But I really must say good-day. Do you see what a dashing red riband they are trimming that cap with down below?” The observation was only made to divert her from a dangerous subject.

“Red, indeed!” said Fanny. “Why, it’s the most beautiful rose colour I ever set my eyes on. Oh, it’s a love of a ribbon! I’ll just run down and ask them to sell me a yard or two of it, and then I’ll trim my best bonnet with it before Sunday.” And skipping down the rest of the stairs, she was soon in the little workroom at the back of the shop, chatting with the milliner’s girls; and so busily engaged in examining and criticising the finery they were making, that Carew was at liberty to pass out without further hindrance.

Thus engrossed in an amusement so congenial to her tastes, Fanny lingered in the workroom till sum-

moned to rejoin her friends; who, having finished their consultation sooner than she had expected, were now ready to depart. The moment Fanny appeared from the inner room, Miss Drake eagerly accosted her,—

“You did not find them at home, did you? They were not over the way?”

Fanny, of course, replied in the negative.

“I thought so,” said the other significantly. “I was sure of it!” and no sooner were they seated in the carriage, and on their way, to set Fanny down in that “horrid Great George-street,” than Sophia, whose good-humour, though it still predominated, had become mingled with a certain eagerness of look and voice, began,—

“Fanny, you tiresome girl! whenever I particularly want you, you are sure to be out of the way.”

“Oh, but Miss Drake,” said Fanny, “I have been buying such a delightful darling of a ribbon. Only look at it!” and in justification of her truant propensities, she unpapered and displayed the bewitching bit of pink. But her friend said only “phoo-phoo!” and looked carelessly at the treasure; while Lady Sarah, whose love of finery was quite as strong at sixty as it had been at sixteen, fell into an ecstasy of admiration; and, but for the opposition of her niece, would have gone back immediately to Maddox-street, and have ordered a new cap to be trimmed forthwith with this most exquisite of decorations. “For nothing,” said she, “suits my complexion so well as a subdued rose-colour.”

“Your complexion!” the other contemptuously

repeated. "Your rouge and pearl-powder, you mean." Then, turning to her bridesmaid and confidante, she resumed the subject that so engrossed her. "But, Fanny, I really did want you very much just now; for do you know you had not been long gone, when who should come through the room where we were sitting, but those people from the lodging over the way; and if you had been there, you could have satisfied me as to whether it was your cousin or not. Not that I believe it to be of the slightest importance, but still it is a thing I should like to know for certainty: so tiresome of you, you naughty little thing!" (this was said quite coaxingly) "to run away just then."

"But why didn't you ask who they were?" said Fanny.

"I did inquire of Madame Fleury; but she is as stupid as the generality of old women, and couldn't tell me anything about it."

Had Miss Drake been in a less amiable frame of mind, she would probably have directed her eyes more pointedly at her aunt, as she gave utterance to this liberal and feeling remark; as it was, she bestowed but a passing glance on the old lady, by way of application.

For a minute or two the peculiar "coincidences" (to use Carew's dangerous word) of this visit to Maddox-street, failed to strike the little Marsham. That beautiful pink ribbon had for the present usurped the place of more serious and important reflections: she was beginning simply to lament her ill luck at being out of the way when her presence

was required, and to wonder if it really was Miss Carew—her eyes all the time fixed on those yards of glossy satin, and her fingers forming them into extempore bows—when lo! a thought—a recollection crossed her: she opened her eyes very wide indeed, and her mouth in the same proportion, and seizing Miss Drake by the hand, uttered an “Oh, my!” and then a “Gracious me!” succeeded by an “Oh, my goodness!” of such portentous emphasis and expression, that the heiress perceived at once that something more than ordinary must have occurred. “Oh, Miss Drake!” here dropping the ribbon, she grasped Sophia’s other hand,—“Oh, I do believe!—Oh, I do really think it—oh!”

“What is the matter, Fanny? What *do* you mean?”

“Oh, I’ve something—such a thing to tell you! I have, indeed!”

“Well, go on, child,”

“Not now,” said Fanny, with a glance towards Lady Sarah: for she knew Miss Drake trusted her aunt with but few of her secrets. “Wait till we get to George-street, and I’ll tell you everything.”

So far had Miss Marsham proceeded openly and naturally: there was no exaggeration in her surprise or vehement expression, for she was suddenly and forcibly struck. But then came ideas of self—her own little self; and titillating visions of Lady Mary Sackville and the Honourable Miss Tyrwhit—“nasty thing!” and that Miss Fane, all kept in the background: peeping, “no doubt,” and prying and pumping in vain to find out secrets of the highest im-

portance, divulged only to the youngest and smallest of bridesmaids; and Fanny thereupon condescended to various little artifices and affectations, to heighten the impatience of her friend, and increase the importance of her communications.

“Oh, Miss Drake! I don’t know how I shall tell you; only I think it’s quite my duty—something that I saw with my own eyes, or I’m sure I would not have believed it. It quite grieves me to think how uncomfortable I shall make you; but I should never forgive myself if anything wrong should happen, and you not be prepared: not that, perhaps, after all, there really *is* anything in it, and you mayn’t mind it much; only it looks odd, you know—that is, *I* should say it looked very queer; and if I were as you are, Miss Drake, I wouldn’t have it happen to *me* for all the world: but I dare say there’s nothing in it.”

Miss Drake, beginning to tremble under the influence of these vague hints, whispered,—

“Only tell me: is it anything about him?”

“Oh, don’t ask me now, dear.”—The true boarding school epithet.—“You shall know everything by-and-bye, as soon as we are quite alone.”

Poor Sophia! The pangs of suspicion and jealousy rendered her for the time, imperious as she was by nature, a passive tool in the hands of a mere child. Her dull grey eyes sharpened into animation, as she fixed them inquiringly on her mysterious bridesmaid; and she almost cried with vexation when the carriage, having got into the wake of a broad-wheeled waggon, they were obliged to proceed at a foot-pace.

They reached Mr. Fothergill’s at last, and leaving

Lady Sarah to entertain the old gentleman, the girls rushed up-stairs to Fanny's room; and then, first locking the door and looking into the closets and behind the bed-curtains, Fanny, with an air of profoundest secrecy and liveliest concern, confided to Miss Drake the extraordinary apparition she had seen emerging from Madame Fleury's back premises. Sophia listened in breathless silence; suffering her little friend to put the worst possible construction on Romilly's conduct, without uttering a syllable either of assent or contradiction: *she* wanted not the prompting of another to make her perceive the perfidy of the man she loved.

"I shouldn't have given it another thought," said Fanny, "when Mr. Carew was so sure of it not being the captain; only when you mentioned those ladies coming out just after I had seen him—dear me! it seems so very odd—now, doesn't it? And I don't know whether you noticed it, Miss Drake, but I heard a man's voice, I am sure I did, in that other room; so he must have been with them, whoever they were: and you say she is a pretty girl, even supposing it was not my cousin—and I begin to be very much afraid it was!"

Fanny was anxious to make an impression on her suffering auditor, and had no objection to originate something resembling a scene; but she did by no means contemplate that the result of her officious communication should be a fit of real hysterics. So it was, however; for, after a few exclamations of horror and rage, jealousy and despair, increasing in violence till she was unable to articulate, the un-

happy heiress to those many thousands fell upon Fanny's bed, in the agonizing throes of that nervous seizure which, to persons inexperienced in such female ailments, is a sight most frightful to behold.

As for Fanny, her alarm was excessive, and deprived her of all presence of mind. Such a catastrophe would have frightened her in any case; but to feel that she had occasioned it herself—that to her imprudent disclosure was to be imputed all this mischief: all these shriekings, and gaspings, and chokings, and kickings—and to find that, although she had raised the storm so easily, and induced Miss Drake to become black in the face, yet that now her utmost endeavours availed not to assuage it, or to restore the whity-brown to its usual moderation of tint—all this embarrassed her beyond measure. After some helpless lamentation, and inquiring once or twice “what was to become of her?” she pulled her bell as hard as she could, and then running to the head of the stairs called so lustily for help, that the whole household was soon on foot rushing to the scene of action.

Even the solemn *tête-à-tête* in the parlour was disturbed: Lady Sarah, distinguishing above the general hubbub the name of her niece, hurried up stairs; and Mr. Fothergill, as nervous as any fine lady, concluding some important part of his house to be in flames, could get no further than the hall; where, sinking upon a chair, he sat helpless and terrified, calling feebly for Hoskins and the fire engines. Nor, even when with difficulty made sensible of the

cause of the tumult above, was he much relieved; for anything like a novelty, especially attended by so unseemly an uproar in that regular and decent establishment, was always enough to overthrow his equanimity for twenty-four hours at least. Besides, as we have elsewhere observed, Mr. Fothergill was sure to be doubly impressed, wherever the fair sex was concerned: a man falling down before him in a fit, would have disturbed him greatly; but a young lady seized with hysterics, in one of his best bedrooms, was a much more formidable affair.

There were so many concomitant evils attending the great fact itself—Lady Sarah lamenting her niece's condition in tears and consternation, Miss Marsham as pale as a ghost, and the servants wondering and whispering, and ready to magnify every report that might and must get afloat amongst the neighbours—he spoke of it afterwards as a scene “truly awful to witness!” and felt the conviction ever present to his little mind, that No. 47 would shortly be the talk of the whole street: for though he might use the word neighbourhood, we know exactly how many of the surrounding houses composed Mr. Fothergill's little world.

Paramount to all other apprehensions, however, was that which soon possessed him, that Miss Drake might continue too ill to be removed from his house; and for upwards of an hour he was left to cogitate on all the inconvenience inseparable from a sick visitor: for no Arabian hospitality governed the motions of his craven spirit; the sacred fact of your having partaken of his bread and salt, entitled you to no

further privileges under the tent of the old widower. There were some amongst his acquaintance who said that a case of brown holland enveloped his heart as well as his furniture, and prevented it from beating as became a man and a Christian.

Lucky was it for him that the honourable invalid was no less eager to go than he to part with her; so that, in a shorter time than might have been expected from the nature of the attack, the troubled spirit—leaving behind it an odour, not of brimstone, but of burnt feathers and vinegar—disappeared from beneath his cold roof-tree.

Peeping from his dining-room blind—for he did not venture to approach nearer, lest he should be implicated in a “scene”—Mr. Fothergill had the infinite relief of seeing Miss Drake supported into her carriage, and fairly driven off.

For him there was no drive that afternoon—no healthy recreation for body or soul, in an amble round the park at six miles an hour, with a chance of a courteous salutation from some one of the few old dowagers, who still survived in the limited circle in which he had passed his helpless unmanly existence. He assured Fanny his system had sustained a severe shock, such as he should not get over for days, perhaps weeks; and that he was quite unequal to going abroad till his nerves had recovered their tone.

“I never saw such a thing but once before,” said Fanny—who was reduced, by the death of the old parrot, to such a craving for companionship, that she was inclined to take the master of the deceased a little into her confidence—“Never but once; for we don’t

go much into hysterics at Latham House: Miss Crump doesn't allow it."

"Doesn't she, my dear?"

"Not unless it's on great occasions."

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Fothergill: Fanny's school revelations always fascinated, though they often alarmed him.

"But one day," continued she, "there was a quarrel between Miss Moffat and one of the parlour boarders."

"Who is Miss Moffat, my dear?"

"Why, sir, she is the English teacher."

"Oh, is she, Miss Fanny?"

"Yes, she is: and it was all about something that we never could find out, though I am sure we tried very hard!" said Fanny conscientiously: "but it was quite a secret, only at last Miss Crump went in and scolded for ever so long! And then Miss Moffat went into hysterics—*strong* ones they said they were! and we all stood at the top of the stairs close to her room and listened, because it was so dreadful."

The old man lifted his hands and eyes, and rewarded Fanny for her anecdote, by retailing another on the same subject, respecting a certain kitchen-maid of his, "in the life-time of my lamented partner."

Once or twice the little Marsham was on the very point of disclosing the cause of Miss Drake's indisposition; but the fear of that lady's displeasure, should the discovery ever be traced to Fanny, joined to the alarming prospect of not being a bridesmaid after all, came in aid of her small stock of discretion; and

she overcame the inclination, and steadily resisted all Mr. Fothergill's leading remarks and fishing questions.

And thus the time wore on: dinner did him some good, and tea that evening was voted particularly refreshing after the "late exciting event;" nevertheless such scenes were spoken of as very trying to the constitution; so finding himself quite unsuccessful in his efforts at pumping Fanny, he proposed going to bed half an hour earlier than usual: as the old gentleman chose to assume that the whole household, as well as himself, had need of additional repose.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT day, when Captain Romilly called in Curzon-street, he found neither of the ladies visible. Miss Drake was indisposed—too unwell to receive visitors—so ran the message, and Lady Sarah remained in close attendance on her niece. Pleasant was the announcement to Romilly ! With all his bravado and disregard of consequences, he could not but feel that his behaviour at the milliner's had compromised him with the Carews, and that he could no longer maintain his equivocal position as the professed lover of Miss Drake and secret pursuer of the fair Carew.

His conscience told him that, if he did not mean to marry the heiress, he ought to lose no further time in breaking off their engagement ; every additional hour that he suffered her to remain in ignorance of his change of feeling, increased the injury he was about to inflict upon her. In seeking her society again, therefore, he had gone trusting that some casual word, rash on his side or wrathful on hers, might induce the rupture which he longed to effect ; though he wanted the moral courage to signify his rejection in formal terms.

Weak man! he fancied in acting thus that it was only poor Sophia's feelings that he was respecting; but the sudden relief of which he was sensible on being dismissed from her door, ought to have undeceived him on that head. His next visit proved equally unsuccessful, the ladies in Maddox-street were also denied to him, and he could nowhere fall in with his friend Carew; yet it was some time before his spirits would sink, or allow him soberly to reflect that the dreaded explanation, which was to render him a free man and Sophy Drake an enraged and miserable woman, was but deferred to another day.

So idly, so foolishly do we rejoice, when, urged by days of uneasiness and nights of horror, we force ourselves in desperation to knock at the door of our dentist, and hear, in answer to our inquiries, that he is engaged for the whole morning, or unavoidably detained at his country-seat at Tottenham. Short-sighted that we are! how do we conduct ourselves thereupon? Do we sincerely lament his absence, or resort immediately to some other of his calling, whom, in our hearts, we know would do our business quite as well? No, not a bit of it: we skip down the steps of this one individual tooth-drawer, with an impulse of childish glee, persuading ourselves that, for the time being, we have done our very utmost to be rid of our grief; though well we know that the pain which has been only lulled through the superior horror of an operation in prospect, will attack us again ere we reach the next street, and cease not till we have eradicated its cause.

Had Captain Romilly made another attempt to

get his tooth drawn, or, speaking less figuratively, had he called again that day at Lady Sarah's, he would have learned that Miss Drake's illness, from whatever source it sprang, was not of consequence enough to keep her at home. With a strength of resolution vastly superior to his own, she had arisen from her bed as soon as she was able, and proceeded straightway to the house of her guardian. There, closeted in his private room, trembling and agitated, she had confided to him her mortifying embarrassments : her doubts and fears respecting Romilly.

She held her aunt in much too great contempt to open her heart to her, and was of too hard and unsentimental a character to shrink, as most women would have done, from opening her case to one of that faithless sex by whom she had been wronged. Mr. Luttrell directed her money transactions, and advised her in the management of her estates, and she looked to him as her natural counsellor in this as in any other difficulty ; so, with scarcely one maidenly scruple, she told him all her story.

To the ear of this grave, dignified man, whose penetrating eye and deep-toned voice would have frightened any other love-sick girl into silence and reserve, she unfolded Romilly's growing indifference, the occurrence at Madame Fleury's ; in a word, all the vagaries of Cupid, as exemplified in the vacillating and most questionable conduct of her intended husband : all being imputed, and apparently with reason enough, to the vicious arts and baneful influence of Carew's mischievous daughter.

Not, indeed, without emotion was the narrative

volunteered: there were tears and sighs, and even sobs, as the heiress proceeded; still she did proceed, and that without blush or hesitation. Mr. Luttrell, who, as she had always treated him with deference and respect, thought much more highly of his ward than she deserved, was greatly impressed with the tenor of her communication; and as he watched her pallid cheeks growing yet paler, and her nose, which was a large and not a pretty one, getting redder and redder, his wrath against Romilly was only surpassed by that which he felt for the wanton who had seduced that foolish young man from the path of honour and propriety.

Nevertheless, he found it no easy task to give the advice so earnestly demanded. It was in every respect an awkward thing to break off the match at this late period, when the marriage settlements were all but ratified, the wedding-day all but fixed; yet, on the other hand, if Captain Romilly meditated marrying Miss Drake, while he continued to flirt with another—that other being soon to become the wife of Francis Luttrell, Esq., of Horton Lodge, in the county of Warwickshire—how would it stand with the duty of Sophia's guardian and chief protector to sanction her doing this great wrong?

And yet there was another side to the question; for the young man was gay and volatile, a most likely subject to become entangled in the snares of a coquette so accomplished in her base vocation as this daughter of Carew's: his pursuit of her might be but the passing folly of a day, such as men of the world think lightly of; while his attachment to Miss Drake, being of that solid description which is not based—no—and here

Mr. Luttrell looked hard upon the face before him—looked with the eye of a connoisseur, as well as that of a trustee,—certainly was *not* founded on the perishable allurements of beauty, might, therefore, be more likely to stand the wear and tear of matrimony.

By interfering too sternly, he might be doing more harm than good; he must speak to Romilly without loss of time, but cautiously and in temperate language: not attributing to him a higher degree of guilt or folly than might really fall to his share. Till this was done, and he had had the young man face to face, eye to eye, and had obtained from his own lips a full explanation of past conduct and present intentions, it would be impossible to decide on the best course to be adopted for securing Sophia's happiness and respectability. Mr. Luttrell, however, had never read Mrs. Glass's valuable treatise, or succession of treatises, on the great business of human life; or just then her introductory hint for the making of hare-pie would certainly have occurred to him: that judicious direction, valuable in many a case besides cookery, which says, "first catch your hare."

In order to this interview, so important to the affairs of Miss Drake, it was necessary first to catch his captain; and as there was something in the tone of the summons which inclined that gallant officer to expect a forthcoming lecture, he took excellent care for the present to keep clear of Great George-street.

Meanwhile, there was suspense and perturbation amongst the Carews. Scarcely had the ladies returned from their morning's walk, when a letter reached them from some private hand—a letter from

their husband and father—which, although bearing the signature of John the *débonnaire*, was written in a style so unusually serious and concise, that it excited no small apprehension in his wife and daughter.

He told them that, by the greatest ill-luck in the world, he had come athwart Mrs. Bradshaw, when he least expected such a mischance. He had sought to pacify her, but for once his fascinations proved powerless; she had waxed furious, had nearly collected a mob around them, and it had not been without difficulty that he had eventually escaped from her. Fortunately, her rage rendering her incautious, she had given him to understand that she was acquainted with his abode; and as he apprehended being taken into custody, if he returned to Maddox-street, he had resolved for the present to avoid that locality. He added that, as things were beginning to look a little awkward, he thought it would be only prudent to consult Mr. Whitaker as to the best course to be pursued under the circumstances; and if his dear Charlotte were not quite sick of her troublesome scapegrace of a husband, he entreated her to meet him at five that afternoon at that gentleman's office, that they might all consult together.

Mrs. Carew acceded to this request immediately. She no longer attempted to conceal from Selby the disagreeable aspect of her father's affairs; but confessed her alarm lest he had either regarded them himself in too careless a spirit, or had been less than candid in his original statement. She had observed that Mr. Whitaker, whose opinion she highly respected, had always seemed less sanguine than

herself with regard to the final result of her husband's adventures: the acute old lawyer, accustomed to weigh the minutest evidence, and dive deep into men's hearts for hidden motives, had probably been struck with much that had escaped her female faculties. The mother and daughter, experiencing again that sense of personal degradation which the nature of their domestic difficulties was sure to entail upon them, passed the intervening hour in most uneasy cogitation. Mrs. Carew then set off to Mr. Whitaker's.

It was during the absence of Mrs. Carew that Mr. Francis Luttrell called at Mrs. Dawes's lodgings. On this occasion his deportment was much more sedate than when we last accompanied him abroad; his step was regular, and he laid a calm hand on the knocker, exercising that usual appendage to street-doors with the gentlemanly ease and neatness which characterized his whole demeanour. There was that in the cold civility of Selby's mother which rendered him always pleased to have some apparent motive, some slight excuse, for calling upon the Carews; and now he had news to tell which must, as he thought, authorize a somewhat late visit: the pleasing intelligence, viz.—for such he knew it would be accounted by Selby—of Mrs. Luttrell and the ladies from the Lodge being expected in town the same evening.

They had given him notice of their intentions by the morning's post; though up to that period these had been carefully concealed, for fear of the plan meeting any formal objection from Mr. Luttrell. True it was, that the lively satisfaction he certainly

experienced on hearing that Mr. and Mrs. Carew were *not* within, but that their daughter *was*, received full confirmation when entering the little drawing-room, he found it tenanted only by his lovely cousin ; but at this point his pleasure received a check, for Selby was unable to receive him with the smiling welcome he had expected. Traces of tears were still glittering on those long lashes he had so often praised in the hearing of his daughter, and there was trouble and constraint in every movement of her graceful form.

From the anxious meditation into which her mother's communication had plunged her, Selby had diverged upon a melancholy train of ideas, which at first uniting the images of her father and her husband, had subsequently left her thinking solely of the latter; and from simple thinking she had proceeded to occupy her solitude in reading over some of Hartley's old letters, comparing more particularly the style and tenor of his later epistles with those early effusions of affection which had afforded her such tender and intense delight. The gloom of her present humour was not favourable to such a study: it caused her to put a yet more jealous construction upon many an expression really innocent in its original and simple meaning, and while growing more and more suspicious of his alienation from her, she had busied herself in the ungrateful task of seeking some clue to discover whether her mother's wrong-headed interference or the influence of Mrs. Hamilton, had been most instrumental in working the ruin of her happiness.

Thus employed, Selby believed herself secure from interruption; having given strict orders that she was to be denied to every one during her mother's absence. Her glance wandered towards Madame Fleury's back door as she spoke the words; but there chanced to be an unusual bustle in the house just then, in the excitement of which Mrs. Dawes forgot to forward the order to Nanny, and consequently the visitor was marshalled up stairs without a moment's hesitation. No wonder that Selby, so surprised, should manifest some confusion, as she saw herself interrupted by Mr. Francis in the very act of reading a love-letter from his nephew.

With a shaking hand she shuffled the papers together, and turned her desk up upon the heap with a reckless precipitation, which showed her no adept in deceit. Mr. Francis, who usually piqued himself on his observance of etiquette—the rules of which, he argued, ought to be maintained amongst even the nearest relations—might have allowed these symptoms of confusion to subside unnoticed, had they alone been visible; but neither his discretion nor politeness were proof against the grief so plainly expressed in every feature of the fair Carew. For a moment he held the hand she offered him, and then with the utmost gentleness—we refrain from using a more tender word—he said, “My dearest cousin, you are in trouble? Something has occurred to vex you? Would to Heaven you considered me worthy to share your grief, whatever may be its source! You might find many a more competent adviser; but few so deeply interested in your happiness.”

A kind word from even an ordinary acquaintance would just then have gone straight to the soft heart of Selby Carew; how much more touching were these expressions of good-will uttered by one she loved so dearly as her amiable uncle.

Luckily, Miss Luttrell was not by, to cavil at the look of tender gratitude which was at first the only answer she could make him: it was only by degrees that Selby found voice to express some portion of the feelings that agitated her—her high esteem and firm reliance on his friendship; adding, while her lip quivered, and her eyes overflowed again—“Above all, I beseech you, sir, not to accuse me of reserve! Oh, if you could but know how joyfully I would tell you everything that now disturbs me! For I am confident that from you I should have nothing to fear—no harsh judgment or unkind construction!”

Selby might have grounded her discomposure solely on her father's embarrassments, and have safely dilated to so intimate a friend on that mortifying history: but in her solitary musings she had lost sight of everything but the one great and peculiar trial of her life; and, thinking herself only of that, fancied, in the confusion of her ideas, that Mr. Francis's questions all pointed in the same dangerous direction.

“And why, my sweet cousin,” replied he in the same soft and impressive tone,—“why should you hesitate to admit me to your confidence? My zeal to serve you, I am sure you cannot question; and as to my discretion ——”

What Mr. Francis might have been going to say about his discretion, remains a problem even to this day : the fair Carew interrupting him ere he could finish the sentence.

“ Oh, no, sir !” she answered, hastily. “ No, it is impossible ! no, not even to you ;” and her eyes turned involuntarily to the writing-desk, out of which certain angular corners of old letters were protruding in a manner that alarmed her : for Hartley wrote a bold hand, and his uncle’s eyesight was excellent for his years.

“ I will not attempt,” she continued, “ to hide from you that there is an anxiety—a grievous and heavy secret—that weighs upon my very heart, and deprives me of all peace.”

“ But surely,” he gently persisted, “ to *me* you may confide—”

“ No, sir ; not for worlds could I venture ! Oh, if I were the only being concerned in it, indeed you should not have to press me ; but there is—there is another”—she uttered the word reluctantly, and this time did *not* look at the writing-desk—“ another involved in the mystery, and I dare not disclose it even to you my best—perhaps my only friend ;” and withdrawing the hand Mr. Francis still retained, Selby covered her face with her handkerchief, and sank upon a chair.

For a little while there was silence between them ; till Mr. Francis resumed the subject, almost in a whisper. “ You say that there is another person implicated in your affliction ; am I wrong in inferring from that, that there exists some attachment ?”

Selby made no answer, but she sighed almost convulsively.

Mr. Francis became slightly flushed; for a few seconds he stood gazing intently on that fair and disconsolate figure, and if a doubt as to the cause of her emotion lingered in his mind, it was quickly and utterly dispelled. There was that in the hidden face and drooping form of the beautiful Carew, which carried, to an interested observer like him, conviction as full and firm as if her lips had breathed a confession of love.

Mr. Francis then moving to a window, looked out of it, or seemed to do so, for a certain interval; and the lady who was boarding next door to the milliner's—and who happened to be walking in the balcony amongst the flower-pots, in a pink cap and a yellow *négligée*—thought he was looking at her, and conducted herself accordingly.

As we have hitherto been tender of the reputation of Mr. F. Luttrell, we forbear making any inquisition into the nature of his reflections during these few minutes; but, judging by his subsequent deportment, they must have been both wise and good; for when he turned from the window he had resumed his composure, and yet there was not one particle less kindness in his manner than before this startling declaration had reached him: though it might have been of rather a different character from the gallant attention he had sometimes displayed towards his lovely cousin.

“Selby,” he said—and we may remark that from that moment he called her by her Christian

name, as a father would address a beloved child—"my dear Selby, do not think me indelicately intrusive, if I seek to know more of your private affairs. If you, my sweet cousin, could see yourself as you appear to others, you would not wonder at the deep interest you excite. I ask you for no information beyond what you may feel yourself at liberty to grant me; and before all things, tell me if it be possible for me to serve you, or alleviate your too evident distress?"

Selby raised her drooping head and looked at him affectionately. "You serve me now, Mr. Francis," she replied: "the mere sight of you, the very sound of your voice does me good; for it convinces me I am not so lonely in the world—not quite so desolate as I sometimes believe;" and again her voice faltered.

Mr. Francis could not fail being touched by her words, but at the same time they puzzled him. Some orphan or portionless beauty doomed to struggle through the woes and vicissitudes of life might justly lament her condition in a strain like this; but for Selby Carew, surrounded by sincere wellwishers, and blessed with at least one effective parent, how could it apply to her? Such expressions could not but engender queer fancies; and he began to ask himself, was it possible that one whom he was so much disposed to "honour and renown," could be carrying on a clandestine correspondence unknown to her nearest relations. The bare suspicion so disturbed him, that, at the risk of seeming impertinent, he determined to discover, if possible, how the case really stood.

Waiving, therefore, any personal claim upon her confidence, he assured her he was not surprised that, in an affair of the heart, she should scruple to open herself to him or even to her father. "But why, my dear girl, term yours a solitary affliction, while you have a mother to share it with you. With her, your natural guide and guardian, you can have no hesitation to ask counsel and advice." But Selby, fresh from the perusal of those unlucky letters, answered him with an impatience she afterwards regretted.

"No, sir; my mother is no counsellor for me! Happy would it have been for me if I had never committed myself to her guidance!" Then seeing his surprised look she proceeded. "It is not of her unkindness I complain: my mother's affection and solicitude for me are not to be questioned; her judgment only has been at fault. And, oh! how blindly has that judgment erred: how lamentably throughout!"

Selby was communing more with herself than her companion, as, secure in the impenetrability of her secret, she suffered these words to escape her; and he grew but the more mystified. All that he could imagine was, that the old lady had done what old ladies are apt to do in cases of this tender nature—thwarted in some way or other the inclinations of her daughter: and who could decide, after all, whether she might not have been fully justified by circumstances? So, in the tone of a moderator, he ventured to insinuate that Mrs. Carew might have reasons for crossing the wishes of her child; reasons which, harsh as they seemed to the eyes of affection, might still be grounded on prudential considerations.

Selby could not check a smile, though it was a mournful one, as she heard her good friend aiming so very wide of the mark; and again lamented her inability to explain her situation to him more frankly.

“But I must not be more explicit, dear Mr. Francis!”—how she longed to call him uncle!—“not even to you. A time may come: nay, it must, when you will know everything; and when it does”—she hesitated, and so sweet an expression of sadness mingled with something like shame appeared in her face and manner, that Mr. Francis took her hand encouragingly. The gesture emboldened her, perhaps, for she continued:—“Ah, sir! whenever that time should arrive, will you promise to be still kind to me? And if all the world besides should give me up, will you remain as indulgent as you are now? You were my first friend when I came a stranger amongst you,—dear Mr. Francis, *will* you be my last?”

There was so much of self-reproach discernible in all this mystery, that, had the riddle proceeded from lips less charming, Mr. Francis’s faith in the spotless propriety of the speaker might have faltered; but how could he resist the soft pressure of his hand, or the expression of those eyes, so beautiful in form and colour, that were raised beseechingly to his? Without the slightest reserve or qualification, he promised Selby his cousinly aid and protection, when or wheresoever she should require it; and he again entreated her to believe him actuated by no vulgar curiosity in desiring to know more of her affairs: he was prompted by the simplest but sincerest wish to

be of service to herself and the object of her affections. The colour rushed to Selby's face at this allusion, and she underwent again those odd and uncomfortable sensations, which were so apt to assail her whenever she associated with her husband's family.

Venturing a step farther, Mr. Francis inquired if, without incurring the charge of impertinence, he might presume to ask whether Mrs. Carew's opposition originated in motives of a pecuniary nature? He was resolved not to part from his fair cousin till he had made out a little more of this mystery.

"N-o, not ex-actly," she murmured, much at a loss what to say, or how to divert him from the embarrassing subject. Mr. Francis "would not, *could* not question the *worth* of the happy individual on whom his fair cousin had conferred her esteem."

This was spoken rather pointedly; as in truth he meant it to be a question, and a searching one: but the untranslatable look Miss Carew cast upon him in return, and her evident and painful confusion, so touched his feelings, that it seemed to him positive cruelty to force her to a direct reply.

Politely assuming, therefore, that the lover was quite *comme il faut* (though in his heart he had but a poor opinion of him), on went the unconscious uncle Francis, magnifying the influence of the Luttrell family, and pledging himself for its being exerted towards the behalf and advancement of this unknown admirer. "With his brother's interest among the Ministerial party, something might certainly be done."

Miss Carew looked frightened at the mention of

Mr. Luttrell, and tried to stop her well-meaning but mistaken friend ; but he, taking her embarrassment as only the natural consequence of a subject so tender, proceeded in what he intended as a delicate and yet hopeful strain, not blundering on any abrupt question, such as might shock the fair *inamorata*, but assuming this, and implying that, and taking the other for granted.

While he expatiated on the extensive patronage which his family exercised in most of the liberal professions, touching lightly on each in its turn, he eyed the fair Carew with a scrutinizing though furtive glance. He observed that she bore the mention of their friend the bishop, and their relative the dean, with a composure which shewed that the Church had no particular interest for her in reference to this agitating affair ; neither did she wince at an allusion to the Woolsack, from which her subtle interrogator argued, thinking himself all the while another Ulysses—that the Bar must be a matter of equal indifference. Unmoved, she heard the names of physicians in high practice, and surgeons of the “purest” description ; who, for the honour they bore the family would, at the signal of a Luttrell, rush forward to the assistance of any meritorious young doctor in love or in debt, or in both. Great merchants and India directors did likewise seem of small account. Anon, the old gentleman touched on their power at the Admiralty ; the first Lord being even a sort of connection of the Luttrells, so nearly had the respective houses intermarried. “And then,” said he, “who can doubt that, with

respect to the Army, the exertions of my nephew Captain Luttrell, would alone be sufficient."

"Oh, no, my dear Mr. Francis!" exclaimed Selby, interrupting him with a nervous start, "I entreat you not to urge me now. Be assured of my liveliest, warmest gratitude; but excuse me, sir, if I entreat you to drop the subject: it is too painful to me—too embarrassing!"

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Francis to himself, "the young fellow is a soldier, then: *that* fact is plain enough; and I should not wonder, with a little more of my dexterous management, if I were even to make out the number of his regiment."

But before he could lay any more traps for tender discoveries, a loud rap at the street door, followed by the clamour of female voices in the entry, drew the discourse into a different channel; for Selby, fancying she recognised one of them, started from her seat with a terrified air, exclaiming,—

"I do think it's that horrid woman! that dreadful person!"

"Not Mrs. Bradshaw—not the Red Lion?"

"Yes, yes; I remember her voice; even here I can distinguish it: and, good Heaven! it is coming nearer. Oh, sir! can she be coming up-stairs?"

Selby's alarm was, in fact, groundless: the voice did not belong to Mrs. Bradshaw; and, anon, it passed the door, conversing on matters totally irrelevant to the Carew family: but, until it died wholly away in the distance, did she continue to grasp the arm of Mr. Francis; and he to feel very much as Perseus might have done in the matter of the fair

Andromeda—ready for any description of monster that fortune should think fit to throw in his way.

The subject thus suddenly obtruded, must for the time supersede every other; for Mr. Francis knew already so much of Carew's affairs that there could be no impropriety in trusting him still further. And as Selby, happy in the power of being open and unreserved, told him all she was herself acquainted with—the purport of her father's letter, and the errand on which her mother was even then absent—she displayed such lively emotions of indignation and disgust—such a sense of offended delicacy in the apprehension of what might be impending to render the name of Carew contemptible and base—that, seeing the thing in quite as strong a light, and equally struck with the impropriety and painfulness of her position, he exclaimed,—

“I wish to Heaven you had never left Horton! This is no proper home for you: with such a hair-brained father as yours, who can tell what annoyance, and even degradation, you may not be subjected to? Your mother, I am sure, must feel this, and wish that you had remained with us.”

Selby scrupled not most earnestly to echo the wish, though incited by motives Mr. Francis little dreamed of: she thought of her position as his nephew's wife, and of the discredit, the sort of stain which her association with scenes and events such as these must throw upon her. That this ill-starred union might end in her becoming an object of aversion to her husband, she had long contemplated as a mournful possibility: as the result of his own

capricious nature and unbridled passions. She had schooled herself to bow before the affliction, regarding it in the light of a moral retribution ; but that any circumstance affecting herself, through her nearest relations, should excite his contempt—that was indeed a bitter reflection !

When, therefore, Mr. Francis urged her returning immediately to Horton, and taking up her abode at his house, she lent an attentive ear to the proposal.

“ Not that the ladies of my family,” he continued, “ can have the pleasure of receiving you ; for my errand here—in fact, my sole excuse for so late a visit—was to tell you that they are all on their way to town.”

“ Indeed, sir ! Is not that rather a sudden thought ? ”

“ Not so much so as it appears. I have long expected Isabella would not remain quiet in the country much longer : she is uneasy about my brother ; and, besides, I gather from Mr. Pickering, who is always in her confidence, she has a strong presentiment—though how occasioned I cannot say, for *we* have heard nothing to that effect—but she has a notion that Captain Luttrell will arrive almost as soon as herself.”

“ Here, sir ? In London ? ”

“ Yes : but, seriously speaking, I do not place much reliance on maternal presentiments. Allow me to give you a chair, my dear cousin ; the dread of this odious woman has quite unnerved you.”

Striving to preserve an outward composure, Selby answered him as well as she could ; and then Mr.

Francis, with evident awkwardness and hesitation of speech, regretted his inability to do what he knew would be so agreeable to Mrs. Luttrell—viz., offer Miss Carew a present asylum in Great George-street, during this unpleasant crisis of her father's affairs. "But, really, my brother's health and spirits——"

"Don't mention such a thing, I beseech you, sir!" was the eager rejoinder; and Mr. Francis was too well satisfied to slur over this part of the subject to ascertain whether her refusal originated in politeness or pique. Upon the advantages of her removal to his house in Warwickshire, he might safely and eloquently expatiate. "At the Lodge you will find a tranquil home, at least; though, at this period, we cannot promise you much society—our neighbourhood is thinning considerably just now: the Ashursts have left for Weymouth, and the Fortescues talk of a tour to the lakes."

Selby forced herself to say something civil; she hoped he did not suspect her of requiring any society beyond the Lodge gates. The news she had just heard had disturbed all her faculties: she knew not what she ought to say or do. But Mr. Francis, perfectly satisfied with a compliment, which, the day or even hour before, would certainly have heightened his complexion, pressed the hand of his lovely cousin and replied,—

"That, though formed to adorn the most brilliant circle, he knew she placed her chiefest pleasure in the sweets of domestic life;"—and pursuing the same theme, the absentees from the Horton neighbourhood,

he proceeded,—“and Myrtle Cottage, too, is losing its bright attraction.”

“Mrs. Hamilton?” said Selby, quickly; her countenance changing, as usual, at the sound of that name. “Is *she* coming to London?”

“Yes; our handsome neighbour is also on the wing: but probably her absence,” Mr. Francis archly observed, “may not affect you very seriously. You see, my sweet friend, I have not forgotten our old quarrel on that fair subject.”

“And what can be Mrs. Hamilton’s motive for such a journey?”

The question was a simple one, yet Miss Carew’s complexion flushed, and she assumed even a stern expression as she asked it.

Mr. Francis, still indulging in badinage, replied,—

“What *can* be supposed to govern the conduct of so excellent a wife, but her husband’s welfare? She is anxious that Mr. Hamilton should consult a London physician.”

“And she will force that poor man up to town in this oppressive weather.”

“Nay, there will be no compulsion in the case; he is quite as desirous as his Alicia to try further advice.”

“Advice! Oh, Heaven!”

Her indignant contempt is not to be expressed; and, to his infinite surprise, the good man heard—at least he thought so—the words, “Shameless, abandoned woman!” uttered by Miss Carew, in a low but distinct voice. Distinct, in truth, the whisper must have been; for never, without the strongest

ground for so presuming, could Mr. Francis, himself a model of good-breeding, have imagined it possible for expressions so harsh and unaccountable to have fallen from those coral lips.

His beautiful relative then fell into a reverie of the deepest description ; for while Mr. Francis kept enlarging on her return to Horton, offering himself or Mrs. Grey as her escort any day or hour she should please to name, she stood twirling her watch-key, her eyes all the time evidently fixed on her writing-desk, plainly oblivious to everything that was passing. When she did rouse herself from her waking dream, it was only to thank Mr. Francis very gratefully, and to put a decided negative on his proposal.

“ To leave London at present would be totally out of her power—she *must* remain in town.”

Mr. Francis was disappointed ; and he might also have been a little piqued, if, in the seeming caprice of the fair Carew, there had not been a certain mystery apparent, which stirred at once his surprise and curiosity. They parted, therefore, on the kindest terms. Though foiled in his endeavours at being useful on the instant, he repeated his proffers of future service ; and not without one more allusion, delicate though sly, to the unknown and highly favoured individual (whose regiment, nevertheless, Ulysses had *not* ascertained) : an allusion which suffused the cheek of Selby with such a blush as shed an additional charm over her parting acknowledgments.

“ But why it is,” said the old gentleman, solilo-

quizing, as he descended the stairs,—“ why it is that this lovely girl always bristles up—if I may use the term—at the mention of Mrs. Hamilton, I cannot conceive. Upon my word, it is the strangest thing ! quite incomprehensible. My ladies, I am aware, have a sort of prejudice against her, springing from Heaven knows what female crotchet ! but that can be nothing to Selby Carew. No, no ! I plainly perceive it is but the manifestation of that unamiable—I must needs call it so—very unamiable antipathy which handsome women are so apt to entertain towards a rival beauty : and a very remarkable fact it is, and by no means honourable to the sex.”

And uncle Francis mused thereupon, as he would have done if reviewing the habits of some curious bird or beast, glossy and beautiful to the eye of man, and for the most part of a gentle and conciliating demeanour, yet in its intercourse with its species betraying peculiarities of temper which rendered it worthy the study of the naturalist, philosopher, and man of the world. Nor was this the only phenomenon he had to contemplate in the conduct of this interesting girl. A more than common mystery seemed to lurk in this love-affair of hers. Why, if it was merely an ordinary tale of thwarted inclination, should she conceal so obstinately every circumstance of it from him, and express a fear of being cast off by all her friends in consequence of this prepossession ?

Her language was so strong, and accompanied with such evidences of distress and confusion, that Mr. Francis almost trembled to think what it might por-

tend—what ultimate and, perhaps, irreparable misery—what ruin to fame and reputation! Yet, when he recalled the sweetness of her face, and her touching confidence in himself, he turned indignantly from every suspicion that could reflect upon her perfect purity of mind and conduct. A little foolish he might suppose her to have been, as many a charming person had been before her; “loving not wisely but too well!”—a quotation only trite because it is found so frequently applicable.

The officer, whoever he might be, Mr. Francis was not favourably disposed towards that undefined individual; yet, with an amount of candour highly creditable to him, he argued that after all, as it is the property of love to magnify obstacles, exalting the humble molehill into a flaming Vesuvius, so when he came to inquire into the matter (as inquire he would) he might find that the strongest objection to the young fellow arose from his being on half-pay instead of whole, or something equally pardonable.

In the mean while, whatever might be the true reading of the riddle that so puzzled him, he must perform his duty by this charming creature; watch his opportunity to be useful without officiousness, and do his best to separate her from her father, and place her in some respectable position, where she might be secured against the agitating apprehensions she had just experienced.

Poor child! he shuddered to think what would be her feelings, supposing her to come in contact with that low woman; who was evidently coarse-minded enough to take pleasure in annoying her.

The possibility of such a calamity must be provided for; and an excellent scheme had already occurred to him, which the anticipated arrival of his sister-in-law would help to facilitate. His plan was, to get Selby removed to the house of Mr. Fothergill; the real purpose in proposing such a measure being carefully concealed from the timid old widower, whose own comfort and convenience were to form its ostensible object. And happy, indeed, might he regard himself if he were to be thus easily provided with the blessing he so ardently desired, though he was too indolent and vacillating to procure it through any exertion of his own, viz.,—a safe and suitable companion for Fanny Marsham: one who should comprise in her lovely person all the solid and trustworthy attributes that distinguished Mrs. Cecilia Biggs or Miss Sally Parkinson—the prudence, propriety and gentle dominion of those ladies, without their accompanying disadvantages of sick grand-nieces or lumbago.

Reckoning on a zealous auxiliary to this scheme in Mrs. Luttrell, it was particularly gratifying to Mr. Francis to find her travelling carriage standing at his brother's door when he returned to Great George-street. The trio from Horton had arrived during his absence; and though fatigued with travelling, and labouring under a larger amount of anxiety than she chose to acknowledge, yet so great was her interest in Selby Carew, that the gentle Isabella found time to hear all her brother-in-law had to tell her concerning that "excellent young creature!"

Mr. Francis, by the way, abstained just then from confiding, even to her, any hint of the imprudent attachment; and she readily promised him that it should be her first care on the morrow, to persuade Mr. Fothergill to secure, as soon as possible, so unexceptionable a visitor as their charming cousin.

With the glow of sudden pleasure animating her still lovely features, Mrs. Luttrell extolled the plan her brother had so judiciously hit upon—"it was in every respect so desirable." Their timid old friend would be saved many an anxious moment with his wild young charge; while to her the advantages of such companionship must be inestimable. Nor did she forget her private satisfaction, in an arrangement which would settle her sweet young friend in their immediate neighbourhood.—"It was the very thing she was wishing for, during her stay in town."

Gladly would Mrs. Luttrell have repeated all this to her husband, for where she loved she always longed to confide; but experience had taught her that in questions of minor importance, there was seldom much sympathy between them; and it behoved her during the present season to be especially on her guard, as Mr. Luttrell's temper was evidently not improved by this sudden irruption of the ladies from Horton. True it is, he had borne the surprise better than might be expected, and had even sustained with outward equanimity some conjugal questioning as to the state of his health; still, she judged it advisable, for that night at least, to let him choose his own subjects of discourse: and it may easily be supposed that

the Carews were not amongst those which he voluntarily selected.

But Esther, the anxious Esther, heard all that was passing between her father and her aunt; and much did it alarm her. It was on account of this cousin, so deeply distrusted, that she had quitted her home and favourite pursuits; and in her character of spectator, or spy, she was prepared to undergo a great deal of annoyance. But that the affairs of this young woman, and her worthless connections, were to be discussed so immediately upon their joining Mr. Francis, and that he should openly propose the bringing her in juxtaposition with them all, careless even of his brother's opinions, was what she had not anticipated. And seeing how everything was likely to turn; feeling, too, most painfully, her utter inability to arrest the downward course of events; and mistrusting, moreover, her own forbearance to sustain the trial she had perhaps unwisely sought; Miss Luttrell grew more desponding than ever, and repented that she had come to London.

CHAPTER VIII.

Now, let us see what Mr. Fothergill was doing, on the morning which followed these friendly plottings over the way. Wistful had been the look he had cast on his breakfast-table, as he descended to it each morning, at precisely nine o'clock A.M. ; for he always hoped to find there some communication from Mrs. Marsham respecting the removal of her daughter ; and when day after day the delicate table-cloth had displayed on its snowy surface nothing more interesting than the *Morning Post*, the old gentleman had applied himself to his hot roll and his little pat of butter, with a pang of disappointment that must have gone near to disturb his digestion.

This morning the postman's knock inspired him with fresh hopes ; and sure enough when he came downstairs, there lay a letter from "my cousin Marsham ;" and, Fanny not being present, Mr. Fothergill uttered a devout ejaculation of thankfulness, and broke the seal ; the motto of which, "Better late than never," confirmed his comfortable anticipations. Then rubbing the glasses of his spectacles, that he might the better decipher the scrambling characters of his good cousin,

he forbade Hoskins from pouring out his tea till he had read his letter ; and as that trusty person was quitting the room, he called her back to ask, in a subdued tone, whether Miss Marsham had sent anything lately to the laundress? as he thought it likely, in fact, pretty certain, that she would want all her things home soon to be packed up. The answer followed precise.

“Nothing particular, I believe, sir; a few pocket-handkerchiefs, and a tucker or two: but I am not sure,” continued Hoskins, pausing suspiciously to hearken for a footstep in the hall, and then whispering with the air of a conspirator:—“I’ll not take upon me to say she didn’t give some orders to Betty about sending her best muslin frock with the flounces to Mrs. Grimes.”

“Hush!” murmured her master, glancing an eye towards the half-open door. “No, it’s only John. Well, Hoskins?” and his informant, drawing nearer to his chair, whispered still lower,—

“I am almost confident the word ‘clear starcher,’ passed between them.”

At this, Mr. Fothergill grasping that blessed letter in his fat right hand, lifted a finger of his left, and cautioned her mysteriously. “It must be detained, Hoskins. Betty must, on no account, obey the order;” and Hoskins, returning her master’s anxious look with one of solemn meaning, retired, leaving him to enjoy the contents of his letter. But, alas! a woful man was that fat widower, when, after a world of difficulty, he had made out its drift and purpose; or rather, its want of purpose. It overflowed in flattering compli-

ments, and thanks for his goodness in taking charge of Fanny, and her intense conviction of that dear child's entire felicity under his hospitable roof. It told him news of the county in which she was staying, and of the state of the crops; one christening, two deaths, and a wedding did she cursorily touch upon; a pic-nic party, a dreadful murder, and the overturn of the administration—no, Mr. Fothergill had mistaken the word—it was only the Norwich coach.

But in the midst of all these irrelevant topics,—for so did the reader regard them,—there was not one word—not even the remotest hint—of removing Fanny from No. 47. The old gentleman laid down the manuscript in despair, and then, in a fresh access of impatience, began reading it through again; for there lingered still a slight though fluttering hope that some hieroglyphical scrawl, yet undeciphered, might prove the panacea to his present complaints. Vainly did he search! With laudable perseverance, he succeeded in making out every word but one, which looked like Chrononhotonthologos; and over that he was still poring, the tea cooling in the mean time, the toast becoming limp, the rolls getting doughy, when Fanny Marham, the source and origin of his disturbance, came down to breakfast.

And here occurred a fresh trouble; for, being as much disappointed as himself that her mother's letter held out no hope of her child's emancipation from her present dull quarters, the young lady cried all breakfast-time. She then retired to her own room, there to change her gentle snivellings into sobs of anguish, and write her mama a scolding letter, in return for

what she called her "unnatural and barbarous cruelty;" which long and luminous performance commenced with a threat of immediate self-destruction, and ended with demanding a little more pocket-money.

It was at this auspicious crisis—and surely there could not have been one more calculated to further the friendly project she had in view—that Mrs. Luttrell paid an early visit at No. 47; and after condoling with Mr. Fothergill on his domestic trials, and especially his morning's disappointment; and trying, at his particular request, to make out Chrononhotonthologos—the latter effort proving utterly futile—she proceeded to suggest to him that remedy for all his troubles which she and her brother-in-law had concerted the previous night.

"What did he think of the idea of asking Miss Carew to stay a little while with him? That sweet young cousin of theirs, who would be such a lively and at the same time correct companion for Fanny? It had struck them *all* over the way:" for so, with unconscious self-deceit, did Mrs. Luttrell represent the notion which had, in fact, originated from a contemptible minority; "*they* thought it such a capital plan." Mr. Fothergill, who had a high opinion of the discretion and propriety of their mutual relation, subscribed in every point to the praises Mrs. Luttrell so loved to bestow on her, and gave into the scheme of inviting her to his house with an alertness and decision which might have become a wiser man. His only fear seemed to be, that Miss Carew might not be prevailed on to come.

"So very quiet as they were at No. 47, except

occasionally, on Thursday evenings—no amusement for young ladies: though, if Mrs. Luttrell thought it expedient, he would hire a harpsichord—that is to say, piano, without loss of time. Did she think a harpsichord—that is, a spinet—he begged pardon, a pianoforte, would be kindly taken? In the blue drawing-room—it might stand in the little blue drawing-room—where, keeping the windows shut, it would be no annoyance to my neighbours; whom I am always loth to offend. And then his early hours: would she be pleased to conform to them? They had been regularly observed in the lifetime of ‘my lamented partner,’ and it would quite upset him to alter the rules of his establishment.”

Mrs. Luttrell answered for Selby not wishing to upset Mr. Fothergill in this or any other particular,—

“Quite true: she had appeared to him a very comfortable young person—quite a pattern of decorum.”

And then came the inquiry whether his request had not better be preferred in person—it might seem more respectful; and in fact he had long intended calling upon her, but that bunion in embryo, “a corn, my dear madam, exactly on the first joint of my right little toe,” had hitherto prevented him.

Mrs. Luttrell assured him a written invitation would suffice; and he promised to put his ideas upon paper. In fact, so anxious was Mr. Fothergill to act upon the views of all his kind friends over the way, and secure this treasure of a guest, that almost without one unnecessary fidget, he set about writing to the fair Carew; and if his hand trembled as it

held the pen, it was from pure eagerness, unalloyed by one vacillating scruple.

On her return home, Mrs. Luttrell communicated to Mr. Francis the perfect success of her negociation; and even while they were congratulating each other thereupon, the letter, penned with such unusual promptitude, was forwarded from No. 47, with a request that Mr. Francis would be so good as to direct it to Miss Carew, Mr. Fothergill not being certain if she was still at the Adelphi. Mr. Francis more than obeyed this instruction; for he enclosed the old gentleman's missive in a letter of his own, in which, with a guarded eloquence which he knew Selby would comprehend, he urged her acceptance of the widower's proposal, and her immediate removal to Great George-street. Nay, his kind endeavours did not rest here; for, in his solicitude that the note should come immediately to hand, he resolved to take Maddox-street in his morning's walk, and drop the important despatch himself at Mrs. Dawes's.

Mrs. Luttrell applauded this arrangement, and saw her brother-in-law depart, with a smile of the sweetest complacency; and presently rejoicing in her morning's work, and the prospect of having her young confidante situated so near her, she betook herself to her husband's private room; and though it was a fact, tacitly but fully established in the house, that ladies, generally speaking, were seldom welcome visitors in that apartment, she ventured for once to infringe the rule. Her long separation from her husband might surely warrant a little extra license; and if he could admit his ward into those sacred pre-

cincts, why not his wife ? She knew from Mr. Pickering, that Sophia Drake had been, but the day before, closeted with her guardian for upwards of an hour.

Since her return to Great George-street, Mrs. Luttrell had forbore to touch on any topic likely to excite her husband's feelings ; yet was she longing to hear how he would account for Hartley's unusual silence. Sometimes it inspired her with the hope of his speedy arrival in England ; while at others the gloomiest forebodings assailed her, touching his health or safety. Latterly, the proceedings at Myrtle Cottage had struck Mrs. Luttrell as bearing some possible reference to the subject.

News of the — regiment had been received there of a very recent date—a letter, not indeed from Hartley himself, but from another officer, a mutual friend : but, though known to be so deeply interested in the matter, only a portion of this letter had been read to her by Mrs. Hamilton ; and from that lady's sudden determination of visiting London, Mrs. Luttrell could not help suspecting she might have heard more of Hartley's intentions than she chose to repeat to his mother. Without having, perhaps, any definite grounds for such a supposition, she became strongly impressed with the idea that the too fascinating Alicia was hastening to town to seek, not so much a doctor for her husband, as a lover for herself : it was this suspicion, in fact, which had influenced her own change of place. She knew in her heart, that her husband, nervous and irritable as Pickering had described him, would derive but little benefit from her presence ; for it was precisely when

he most needed her advice, that he always refused to take it.

But if she could not flatter herself with being of use to the father, to the son her assistance might prove invaluable. She dreaded beyond anything that Hartley, on his first arrival, should be drawn within the circle of this woman's witcheries, without being herself at hand to warn and, if possible, protect him from her wicked influence. Alas! she knew well that her maternal efforts might be all in vain: the poison of illicit love might have sunk deep into a heart which in its boyhood had been so pure, so almost romantic in its noble sentiment and virtuous aspirations. Nevertheless, she would be there to watch over him, and pray for him; and if no other good resulted from the step she had taken, she should at least be able to ascertain, without delay, the truth or falsehood of her grievous apprehensions.

Mrs. Luttrel was not the only individual of the proscribed sex who found her way that morning into Mr. Luttrel's study. His niece, sick of the folly she believed to predominate everywhere else—her father's dotage, her aunt's infatuation—had previously repaired to that which seemed to her the only room in the house where stern propriety and unclouded sense were to be found. She had observed the progress of the plot (for so she termed it) with quite as much disgust as apprehension: the little conference between Mrs. Luttrel and Mr. Francis, their satisfied air and tender mention of the fair creature in whom they were taking so deep an interest; and then the early visit to Mr. Fothergill's: her aunt

rushing almost from the breakfast-table to further her silly, worse than silly scheme! Not one threatening symptom was lost upon Esther Luttrell; and her worst fears seemed rapidly realising: a shadow dark and gloomy lay across the threshold of her beloved home; ere long to become a substantial evil in the form—the desecrating form—of a stepmother and a Carew!

In deep despondency, she meditated on the deterioration which must ensue in the character of her once respectable father, the overthrow of all their domestic arrangements: of that peaceful order and unanimity of feeling and interests which had formed the chief solace of her saddened existence. The children too, the very servants at the Lodge, how long would their comfort remain uninfluenced by the approaching revolution? And Esther's cold grey eye grew softer and kindlier as it rested on her old companion—there she sat with her usual calm contented air. But too surely the time would shortly arrive when Mrs. Grey would find herself regarded as an encumbrance at the Lodge: she, who was one of themselves in everything but name, might soon be denied an asylum at their hearth, and have in her old age to seek another home.

This one stroke finished the ungainly picture. "At least we will go together!" thought Esther, who had worked herself up by degrees to a pitch of quiet desperation; and, unable to remain fixed to one spot any longer, she wandered from room to room; till, finding herself at the door of her uncle's study, she was seized with an uncontrollable desire

to ascertain whether he had any suspicion of the strange and important events that were coming to pass in the bosom of his family.

Mr. Luttrell, on the other hand, was equally anxious to see his niece alone, without the formal request of a private interview; so that, instead of being received with the surprised glance or cold civility—the sort of look which plainly said, “What may your business be here, good woman?”—she had scarcely shown herself on the threshold, when she was requested to come in and shut the door after her.

The next step was *not* equally satisfactory. Full as she was of the subject which had driven her from the shades of Horton, even to this solemn interior—this lion’s den—her feelings underwent a sort of shock when her uncle, without the smallest circumlocution, rushed at once into the midst of the grievance,—

“Esther,” he exclaimed, throwing down the pen he was using, and pushing his chair from the table, “what on earth is the meaning of all this stuff I hear about your father and these people in Maddox-street? You know who I mean? these Carews,” he added impatiently; for, startled by the suddenness of the attack, she did not immediately answer him. “Surely,” he went on, “there must be some mistake—some unaccountable error in the report. He can’t—he *can-not* be fool enough to meditate marriage with a girl of that age! And of such parentage, too!—the father a mere adventurer: for, I understand, he turns out to be little better. Now, let me know how the case really stands?”

Miss Luttrell had often admired the plain, unpromising language of her uncle ; their opinions generally coincided ; and, even when they did not chime quite so harmoniously together, she liked to hear him declare his own, in the straightforward diction which seemed to tally so well with his age and dignified position : but now the subject in hand touched her so very closely, that she would have preferred having it handled in a gentler and more courteous manner. There are various ways of pumping from the “ well of English undefiled ;” and it seemed to Esther that, on this particular occasion, her respected uncle was “ drawing” it anything but “ mild :” in short, she did not feel at all comfortable at hearing her father called a fool, even by his elder brother.

Divining what made her colour and hesitate, Mr. Luttrell proceeded :—

“ My dear, it is useless to attempt mincing a matter like this. Between you and me, the observance of an idle etiquette would be absurd : and to say the truth, Esther,” he added, with some asperity, “ I took you for a woman of more sense than to have required it. I wished to speak to you on your father’s affairs, under the conviction that you would tell me the plain truth, without reserve or hesitation ; but, if you are offended, I have done.”

“ No, no,” said Esther, “ it is not that ; for, of course, sir, on this subject we can have but one opinion. But, my dear uncle, if you knew how distressing to me is the whole affair, and how much I have suffered lately——”

“That I can easily credit; but still, Esther, if we are to continue on our old confidential terms, we must make use of the same plain, unvarnished language we have hitherto held together. I, at least, have no other at command, whatever or whoever may be under discussion. Perhaps, if I felt less personally,” said Mr. Luttrell, with a mixture of sternness and emotion that was not lost on his hearer, “I might be better disposed to gloss the matter; but it presses upon me much too painfully. At my time of life, Esther, the loss—for such it must inevitably prove—the loss of a brother is no trifling misfortune—the alienation, more bitter to be borne than death, of the dearest friend I have on earth. Now, Esther, if you are going to cry, we had better leave off talking: I looked to you for a calm sense and firmness of character; instead of which——”

“That is all very well, sir,” said poor Esther, rather peevish in her turn, and gulping down her emotion with some difficulty; “but, if you feel this business so deeply, think what a trial it must be to me!—to me, who have been on the spot, and doomed to witness the progress of the whole affair.”

“And you actually believe, then, that there is something serious in it? I trusted Pickering might have been deceived: he can make blunders enough sometimes.”

“Pickering? Mr. Pickering!” repeated Miss Luttrell, sharply. “I should like to know what *he* has to do with it? Really, I think Mr. Pickering might find something better to do than to gossip about what does not concern him!”

“It *does* concern him, Esther,” was the solemn rejoinder; “it concerns everybody in the slightest degree connected with us, or who takes any sort of interest in our welfare and reputation. As an old and sincere friend of your father’s, Pickering must necessarily feel anxious and distressed when he sees him contemplating a foolish action: for, I trust, it is only yet in contemplation. You don’t imagine there’s any positive engagement subsisting, eh? He has not really proposed marriage to this girl?”

“Heaven knows what may have happened by this time!” said Esther gloomily; “his infatuation exceeds anything I could have believed. But I must say it is the same with everybody—my aunt is almost as much bewitched by her: she is at this moment over the way, trying to persuade Mr. Fothergill to ask the young woman to stay with him and Fanny Marsham.”

“What! to take her into his house? Madness! utter madness! But,” with a brotherly sneer, “your father in that case had better take care; since the lady has a liking for elderly widowers, she may chance to transfer her affections to the eldest and the richest of the two: not that, from what I hear in other quarters, she confines her partiality to the old and decrepit.”

“Ah, if she would only do that!” said Esther, “but, with all her pretended simplicity, I take her to be much too worldly not to secure the game she has already started. Oh, uncle! if you had but seen how cleverly she has played her part—not merely with my poor father, but with every living creature

that came near her—how she has insinuated herself into their affections, and wound herself, as it were, about them, you would hardly wonder at his falling a victim to her artifices. Why, even Mrs. Damer seemed hardly to appreciate her real character; and to this day, I suspect, Mrs. Grey has a sort of liking for her.”

“She is good-looking, I suppose?” said the uncle. “I think Mrs. Luttrell wrote me something about her personal appearance, when, in an evil hour, she dropped among you.”

“Oh, sir, she is a professed beauty,” replied the niece. “Our ‘lovely cousin,’ or the ‘fair Carew,’ are but the least of the tender epithets constantly bestowed upon her: she is the admired of all beholders at Horton. Still, uncle, it is not that: it isn’t her beauty, after all, that has procured her this sudden and extraordinary influence—it is the daily, hourly flattery. Such constant adulation, especially of my father and my aunt: I must say I wonder, after all, at the gratification they derived from her fulsome attentions. I don’t, of course, expect everybody to be as cold and as clear-sighted as myself; but when I see such sudden attachments springing up between persons who had displayed almost an antipathy to each other for the best part of their lives, I must say it passes my comprehension entirely.”

“Why, your aunt is soft-hearted and easily conciliated; and as for Francis, you know it’s not the first thing of the kind. Wasn’t there something about that Miss — what’s her name?—Blenkinsop? Eh?”

“ Oh, that was a mere trifle !” said Esther, still tender of exposing her father’s little weaknesses more than she could help : “ only a vague notion of mine, that, perhaps, I was wrong to entertain.”

“ Humph ! it may be so ; but, I remember, you sent her off rather in a hurry.”

“ Y-e-s ; but this is quite another matter, and of a nature far more serious.”

“ Serious, indeed ! I have had some trouble with Francis in my time ; but now, I did trust, it was over, and that he was come to something like years of discretion !”

Thus meditated the elder brother, and then gradually ascending from the contemplative key, Mr. Luttrell burst into a fierce invective against artful young women and middle-aged simpletons ; and proceeded to set forth all the actual and possible evils of his brother’s condition so forcibly, that Esther, even while she acceded to every word he said, felt sick and miserable as she listened to him, and seized the first opportunity of stopping the flow of his oratory.

“ Don’t I hear my aunt’s voice ?” said she. “ Yes, she has come back from Mr. Fothergill’s. And now, my dear uncle, you are the only person who can take such liberty with my father—try what you can do with him : make at least an effort to bring him to himself, for he will bear a great deal from you ; and, at all events, it is but right he should know what people are thinking of his conduct.”

“ All utterly useless, Esther : if he has reached this pitch of insanity, no effort of mine will arrest him in his desperate career. But, as you desire it, I will

enter on the subject with him : perhaps I ought to have done it before, but latterly we have seen but little of each other ; and then I have had other things to occupy and annoy me—exceedingly annoy me—that affair of poor Sophia's."

"Miss Drake, sir?"

"Ha! Yes, another victim perhaps."

"What do you say, uncle?"

"Never mind; time will shew, and perhaps the one affair may counteract the other. But it shall be done now: I will delay it no longer; and Mr. Luttrell rose and walked towards the bell: as you say, Esther, he shall not plead ignorance of the opinion of the world—he shall be given to understand that others are not as great and consummate blockheads as himself."

"Yes, but not just now; wait till you are a little cooler—indeed, sir, you had better wait."

"God bless me! Miss Luttrell, how inconsistent you are! You intrude upon me, alarming my fears, and exciting my just indignation, agreeing to every word I utter, and urging me to act with decision, and then you relapse into these womanish apprehensions—a thing I detest."

"Yes, uncle, but just at this moment you are excited."

"Excited!" he repeated contemptuously, "give it the proper term, child—tell me at once I am in a passion: it is no more than the truth. I am heated and irritated beyond my patience, and you know I am but too well justified in being so. Where is Francis? I must speak with him instantly!" he

called out as Mrs. Luttrell entered the room. Fresh from the mission she had been executing over the way, and pleased at its success, she answered him with a sweet smile and cheerful accent.

“My dear Mr. Luttrell, he can’t possibly come to you just now, for he is but this moment gone off to Maddox-street.”

“Maddox-street!” repeated her wedded lord, exchanging an indignant glance with his niece—
“*Mad-ox! mad-man!*”

Mr. Luttrell had, on ordinary occasions, little or nothing of the punster in his disposition, and how it came to pass that, at this moment of fierce fraternal resentment, he should have condescended to a paltry play upon words I must leave it to some wiser metaphysician than myself to explain. The fact, however, stands on record, and may be taken as an argument in favour of those far-fetched conceits which used so liberally to garnish the passionate speeches of our old dramatists; whose despairing lovers or tyrants in a rage, are so often to be found figuring forth their tremendous emotions in wire-drawn similes and allusions to everything in nature but the business in hand. Here, however, ends the comparison, for Mr. Luttrell’s fierce joke went not a step further; while Beaumont and Fletcher, or Shakespere himself, in such a case as his, would have continued the metaphor, and have pursued that *Mad-ox* through every highway and blind alley of their fertile fancy, till they had lodged him at last in a china-shop.

But to return to poor Mrs. Luttrell: for surely an epithet of compassion may be applied to her now. Let

the reader picture to himself her surprise and dismay on discovering what was passing in that sombre, stuffy, book-room of her husband's. She had entered it with such satisfied feelings, that she was doubly startled by the gloomy and severe faces that there met her view. The one ruling thought, as usual, crossed her immediately.

"You have heard bad news," she exclaimed; "I see it in your looks: something dreadful has happened to Hartley!" and turning pale, she sank into the chair Mr. Luttrell had just quitted.

"There!" said he, waving his hand with an odd expression of triumph, as if congratulating himself and his audience that his disasters had now attained their climax—the very top of the pyramid. "There, Esther! your aunt's going to faint away!"

But Esther denied the fact point blank, and with a few calm assurances she soon succeeded in removing Mrs. Luttrell's apprehensions. It was a much more difficult task to enlighten her as to the real cause of those signs of more than ordinary disturbance which had originally misled her; especially as Esther, who would have explained the matter in a calm and lucid style, thought proper to leave it entirely to the management of her uncle: evading the premises as soon as he began to speak.

Then it was that, to her extreme astonishment, and even indignation, Mrs. Luttrell heard her own particular friend and trusted confidante—that very Selby Carew whom she had been so busily negotiating to have settled amongst them—that sweet and charming creature—proscribed in the severest terms, as a

woman of a mischievous character : an artful, low-minded, insidious deceiver ; whose presence had proved pernicious, nay, ruinous to the peace of the deluded family, who had so imprudently admitted her to their acquaintance.

At first, Mrs. Luttrell's amazement partook of a kind of horror ; for, having never been admitted to Esther's confidence, she could not conceive in what respect Miss Carew could have given her husband any cause of offence ; and it struck her that his disordered state of health was shewing itself in the most fearful of all symptoms—an aberration of mind.

A pleasant position this for the once united family of the Luttrells—one member of it accusing his brother of mental fatuity, whilst he, in his turn, was suspected by the wife of his bosom of labouring under an utter derangement of intellect !

Gradually the truth broke upon her. Her husband, she discovered, was not mad, in a medical or legal way ; mad only with prejudice and passion. The circumstance of his having been previously closeted with his niece, explained, in some degree, the source from which his misconceptions were derived ; for Mrs. Luttrell knew that Esther looked coldly on their beautiful cousin, though she had little imagined the extent of her antipathy. Now, she was thoroughly, though slowly enlightened ; and from this moment found a clue to the interpretation of much that had seemed strange to her in her niece's deportment towards their unoffending guest and relative : and which, hitherto, she had been contented to ascribe to mere whim, or the old

family grudge against anybody bearing the name of Carew.

And so this innocent, open-hearted young creature was accused of seeking to ensnare the affections of a man almost old enough to be her grandfather! Selby Carew, with all her striking advantages of person and mind, suspected of forming no higher aim for her worldly endeavours at advancement in life, than the entrapping a widower past fifty; not remarkable for riches, and certainly—his eldest daughter especially considered—by no means free from encumbrances.

Mrs. Luttrell actually smiled when she heard the notion proclaimed; “it was so very ridiculous.” But she was not allowed to treat the subject in this careless manner: unless she intended to drive her husband really out of his senses, she must canvass it at least seriously. With much more spirit and energy, therefore, than he was accustomed to see her display, she rebutted every charge he was bringing against her young favourite. It was all error and misconception, from beginning to end: he had not been on the spot himself—had not so much as seen the person he was accusing.

“But Esther,” it was replied; “had she not been an eye-witness of all that was passing? Was *she* likely to be misled, her own father being the victim especially threatened?”

Mrs. Luttrell boldly and utterly rejected her niece’s evidence,—“Esther had conceived an unfavourable impression of Miss Carew, from the moment of her appearing amongst them.”

“And not without reason!” was the quick rejoinder. “Be assured, she had full reason for her bad opinion of the young woman. Esther Luttrell has a depth of penetration not easily to be led astray; and not certainly to be affected by the art and trickery that some people found so seducing. No question but she had seen through her designs—they must have been pretty palpable—very early indeed in the young lady’s career.”

“Her designs!” his lady scornfully repeated. “Poor Selby! poor thing!”

Mrs. Luttrell felt the sting of her husband’s remarks all the more acutely, that she was aware her own reputation for acuteness did not stand very high amongst her family: but, still, she was more offended on Selby’s account than on her own; and for the first time in their married life, Mr. Luttrell found his wife bent on asserting her own opinion in direct opposition to his,—

“She was sure,” she said, “he would not call upon her to do a harsh thing, unless herself convinced of its propriety; and whatever whims and fancies other people might take up and act upon, she (unless observing something really objectionable in John’s daughter) would not consent to give up one whom she regarded as her friend.”

“Your friend!” the word was accompanied with a sneer; “your flatterer, you mean.”

Mrs. Luttrell glowed with resentment; but with that excellent temper, which few people besides the fair Alicia contrived to ruffle very perceptibly, she answered that, of course, he might apply what

name he pleased to this young lady : though a time might come when he would be sorry to have used them. For the rest, she must abide by the degree of discernment which Heaven had pleased to bestow on her ; however small the portion might seem in the sight of himself and some of his friends.

“ But,” she added, softening her tone, “ be assured I will save you any personal annoyance you might feel in meeting Miss Carew : she shall not be in any way intruded on your notice ; nor, whatever may be my own inclinations, will I invite her under your roof.”

Here he burst out. “ Invite her ? invite her here ? No, that you most assuredly will not ; or, if you do, I promise you, Mrs. Luttrell, I leave the house as she enters it !”

“ Oh, William ! it grieves—it shocks me to hear you ! And as for Esther, she ought to blush for the mischief she has done by her unchristian prejudices.”

“ Stop, Isabella ! do not run away with the notion that I am actuated solely by the suggestions of female caprice. In the first place, Esther’s information is *not* the only source from which I have acquired my knowledge of this person’s character ; and, understand me, that with regard to your niece, she has done little beyond confirming the suspicions which her father himself had originated. I should hardly have listened to Mr. Pickering’s hints—though he knew perfectly well what he was talking about—but it was from Francis himself I imbibed the idea of——”

.

“Francis! My dear Luttrel, you don’t mean that?”

“I do mean it, Isabella; and you must have been blind if you did not perceive it long ago.”

“But,” persisted Mrs. Luttrel, “do you mean to say that your brother has acknowledged the weakness which you and Esther impute to him? Oh, it is impossible!”

“Why, of course, it is impossible. You don’t imagine he would have the effrontery to tell me point blank that he intended marrying a girl like that?”

“Well, then,” said the bewildered wife, “if he made no communication to you, why imagine such an unlikely and distressing case?”

“Why, God bless me, Mrs. Luttrel! are you so strangely incompetent to construe what passes under your very eyes, that you must have oral as well as ocular proof of it? For my part, he no sooner entered this house than I discovered something peculiar about him. Pickering had already observed it; and though he did not in set terms proclaim his folly to the world, and say, I am ass enough to turn amorous in my old age, and am resolved to disgrace my family, and make myself a laughingstock and a proverb to posterity—though he did not say all this, it was declared in every look and gesture of the man. Yes, I repeat it, it was perceptible to the meanest capacity.”

“Meaning mine,” thought his gentle wife: but she kept the observation to herself.

“What else,” continued Mr. Luttrel, rising in wrath the longer he dwelt on these frailties of him

of the junior form, "what else could account for his unusual abstraction or for his frivolity when he did condescend to speak? I found him careless, trifling, indifferent to my feelings, and utterly regardless of public affairs—in short, an altered creature, Oh, trust me, his outward demeanour was a sufficient index of the fatuity lurking within! To see him smiling, and smirking, and—and skipping about!"

"Smirking and skipping? my dear Luttrell, I never saw him do anything of the sort in my life."

Mr. Luttrell felt that in the heat of discussion he had obviously distorted facts: to the first parts of the sentence, indeed, the smiling and smirking, he would have taken his affidavit; but in striving after a climax, and, perhaps, misled by "apt alliteration's artful aid," he had hit upon a wrong word, and spoiled the effect of much that had gone before it. The move had been hurried—he had opened the way to a check, and his adversary pounced upon the error.

"Skipping!" she repeated. "Oh, no: Francis never did such a thing before me."

"Phoo, phoo!" said he, sinking from the irate to the peevish. "You know well enough what I mean—in short, the thing is as clear as noon-day; and Francis is a lost man. Let me, therefore, hear no more of this mischievous girl, till she is forced on my notice in a way that affords no mode of escape. Till then, as you value my health and our mutual tranquillity, let the name of Carew remain unmentioned between us."

Mrs. Luttrell, taking her husband at his word—for

well she saw that further discussion was worse than useless—left him and went her way. She moved, however, with a slow step and a saddened heart.

Being still unshaken in her good opinion of Selby, she held it her duty not to give her up ; but whatever degree of intercourse might now take place between them, it must, she foresaw, be prosecuted in open opposition to her husband, as well as others of her family. And this was a position entirely new to her ; for the Luttrels were by no means one of those affectionate households who quarrel together from morning till night : scenes such as that we have just described were rare, indeed unknown amongst them ; and in particular, Mrs. Luttrell's gentle nature and delicate sense of propriety were equally averse to domestic bickering.

Much did she now regret her early visit to Mr. Fothergill, and the advice she had so unwarily given to bring amongst them this bone of contention in the shape of a “maiden fair and free”—rather *too* free, as some people said : but of that Mrs. Luttrell would not believe a single syllable ; and she heartily hoped that Selby might decline staying at No. 47.

Ignorant as Mrs. Luttrell was of the proceedings of the Carews, she suffered herself to build upon a chance which would extricate her from the embarrassing position in which she had placed herself. As long as her young cousin remained with her own family, and at a distance from Great George-street, a very slight exercise of civility, an occasional note or kind message, would suffice to maintain the friendly feeling subsisting between them ; and Mrs.

Luttrel trusted to time, and the real merits of the fair Carew, for clearing away the obstacles which stood in the way of a stricter intimacy. Had she been cognisant of the real state of affairs in Maddox-street, her hopes on this score would soon have been extinguished.

We took leave of Mrs. Carew as she was wending her way to give her husband the meeting he requested at Mr. Whitaker's. From that consultation she derived little comfort; unless it might be the sort of serenity which results from having our proper mode of action laid down before us, and settled as a thing indisputable. Had Mr. Whitaker been previously unacquainted with his client, or had he taken no particular interest in that client's wife, his advice would probably have been very opposite to that which, under the actual circumstances, he held it his duty to offer. He would have rested satisfied with Mr. Carew's account of the origin of his difficulties, and seeing little that argued malice aforethought, or threatened any very disgraceful consequences in the affair, he would have proposed his abiding manfully the event of Mrs. Bradshaw's violent proceedings. But he was an old and sincere friend to Charlotte Carew, and had a thorough knowledge of her husband's character and rakish career; and, having formerly deemed him capable of the grossest impropriety, he could not now be persuaded that cousin John was to be relied on in any one particular.

'T was to no purpose that Mrs. Carew argued the point favourably for the said John (she had taken

care to be the first at the lawyer's chambers, that she might speak to her old friend with perfect unreserve); it was in vain that, admitting Carew's former laxity of principle and wild habits, she alleged his subsequent improvement in morals and manners as a just reason for her trusting him now; laying great stress on the fact of his having given one plain unvarnished statement, from which he had since scarcely swerved in a single particular: for had the original story been fabricated, she was certain, from her knowledge of his turn of character, thought, and expression, that he would never have stuck to his text—but he had been clear and consistent throughout, and she was fully convinced of his speaking the truth—of his having been the victim rather than the deluder of this odious woman; and, growing heated in his defence, she felt very much inclined to quarrel with her friend and legal adviser before her husband made his appearance.

On one point, especially, they were at issue—the question of abandoning Carew; for so she designated Mr. Whitaker's advice to send him abroad immediately, and remain with her daughter in England. She owned that, for all their sakes, and especially for Selby's, it was advisable that a public prosecution should be avoided; which, even supposing it ended in the honourable acquittal of Carew, must entail an unpleasant notoriety upon him and all connected with him: the very ridicule annexed to such a thing would be almost death to herself, and might involve the worst possible consequences to her daughter.

She readily assented, therefore, to his absenting

himself, and leaving his case to those whose business it would be to encounter Mrs. Bradshaw with the weapons of the law, and sift the true nature of her testimony; but, if he went, she declared herself ready and determined to accompany him.

Whatever John Carew had been in the days of his youth, she had had no material ground of complaint against him since his restoration to his home and family. She might wish him to display a more staid and sober demeanour, and a mind capable of deeper reflection; but the very absence of these desirable qualities, made it the more essential to his well-being that she should be ever near to guard him from the effects of his innate levity.

Should she desert him now in his hour of need, and send him forth to wander alone and unassisted, who could insure him against falling once more into vicious company and idle pursuits, and sinking for ever a lost and degraded man? And then how could she ever forgive herself? No; she would thankfully adopt her old friend's counsel as to the direction in which they had better shape their course,—Scotland, Wales, Guernsey, Jersey, the Isle of Man—in short, wherever Mr. Whitaker deemed most advisable; but separate from her husband she would not.

“And pray, Charlotte, what do you purpose doing with your daughter, all the while you are wandering about with a husband who ought to know how to take care of himself by this time? For I presume you'll not take that handsome girl amongst the rogues and sharpers in the Isle of Man?”

“Don't imagine me dreaming of such a thing: I

shall send her to Stukely, to the Wollastons; who will be only too delighted to have her returning to them so soon."

The plan, thus sketched in the absence of Carew, was perfected in its details as soon as he arrived; and if any doubt remained in the mind of his dear Charlotte as to the propriety of the measure recommended by Mr. Whitaker, her husband's behaviour speedily removed it. For while he even exaggerated the danger he ran of being recognised by the emissaries of Mrs. Bradshaw, he showed such an evident reluctance to leaving the country, that she was persuaded, if left to himself, his constitutional thoughtlessness and impatience of present trouble would dispose him to lurk about London or its suburbs; playing at hide-and-seek with the officers of justice, rather than pursue the plan projected for him by his judicious friends. She doubted even whether he would not yet contrive to give her the slip, unless she were constantly at his elbow: so infirm of purpose was he; so childish in his reckless humour.

Internally fretting, therefore, that Mr. Whitaker should see his depreciating suspicions of the agreeable John so well justified, she was fain to accept his assistance; though it was tendered with a sarcastic sneer, perfectly intelligible to her.

He promised to ascertain what would be their best mode of proceeding, in order to cross the water with as little delay as possible; if no vessel available for their purpose happened to be lying in the Thames, they must proceed forthwith to whatever part of the

coast might best suit them: but, at all events, they were to leave town by the following night.

Having so far settled her future proceedings, Mrs. Carew returned to Maddox-street, little dreaming of the obstacle she was there to encounter in carrying out her original scheme.

Gentle, reasonable, and open to conviction as she had generally found her daughter in the ordinary affairs of life, it never occurred to her that her prudent plans would meet with opposition in this quarter; yet now, for some mysterious reason, Selby could not be made to see the propriety of her return to Stukely.

Mrs. Carew might have imagined that this reluctance to an arrangement so unexceptionable arose from the amiable desire of following the footsteps of her parents, and sharing their fortunes on an unknown shore; but it was evident that no such filial reason graced the conduct of Selby, for her countenance never assumed so disconcerted an expression, as when she found it assumed, as a matter of course, that she should leave town at the same time as her mother, though travelling in another direction.

That night she said but little, but the following morning her opposition took a decided form, utterly at variance with her usual docility—"She had no intention of leaving London immediately: in fact, it was impossible for her to go."

Quite mistaking the grounds of her refusal, her mother represented that if *she*, before night, could complete her preparations for so much more important a journey, Selby could have no difficulty in finishing

hers, and leaving by a much earlier conveyance: always supposing there was a vacant place to be found in the coach that went nearest to Stukely. For Mrs. Carew declared she could not be easy herself unless she saw Selby fairly off to the good old Wollastons: she could not endure the idea of her sleeping even one night alone in a London lodging-house, and having to make her way to a coach-office without even a servant to attend her. And here Mrs. Carew explained that Selby must place no dependence on the attentions of either Mrs. Dawes or Nanny, as it had already been announced by the former loquacious individual, that her old mistress and her invalid master were coming up to take possession of her lower rooms; their arrival that same evening being rendered uncertain, only through the extreme weakness of Mr. Hamilton, which prevented their travelling except by very short stages. The house was astir with preparations for their reception; and this was another reason for Selby leaving without delay: for who could tell the bustle and inconvenience that might ensue on the arrival of these people.

But to Mrs. Carew's surprise, this argument seemed rather to confirm than weaken the obstinacy of her child. Selby's lip curled with a sort of scornful sullenness, as she asked,

"What would it signify to her? And as to mere appearances, she had already sacrificed too much to them: besides, who would trouble themselves with her or her actions; unthought of—uncared for as she was?" And then her voice sank in an impatient murmur, that she "was born to misery, and it little mattered what became of her."

Her mother's astonished look roused Selby to the propriety of excusing, or at least accounting for her conduct; so with a faltering voice—for now she hated to mention his name before Mrs. Carew—she said she believed it to be possible, just possible, that Hartley might soon arrive; and surely she could not be expected to leave London almost as he was entering it: she could not do so strange, so unfeeling a thing.

Less and less satisfied, Mrs. Carew replied, "I thought you were resolved not to wait for him: you told me so when first you came here;" and then with a penetrating glance she asked, "What can have happened to change your mind so suddenly?"

"Oh, nothing: of course nothing. What could have happened?" And then her tone changed again, "Indeed, mama, you must let me have my own way, and trust to my prudence for conducting myself safely; and you know whenever I do wish to leave, the dear, old people at Stukely will always afford me a refuge." And Selby referred to a most kind letter she had lately received from Mrs. Wollaston, full of affection and village news.

Mrs. Carew saw how ineffectual were her attempts to persuade her refractory child, and she began to think Mr. Whitaker not altogether unreasonable in the view he had taken of her own conduct. In devoting herself to her husband, and sacrificing every duty to that of setting bounds to his folly and extravagance, was she not neglecting the interests of her daughter? Was she not deserting her at the very time when she would most require the counsel and coun-

tenance of a cool and wary friend? And thus pondering, Mrs. Carew grew so reluctant to leave Selby at this important crisis, that she was actually meditating the propriety of leaving the agreeable John to manage his own affairs till she had done something towards settling those of Mrs. Hartley Luttrell; when Mr. Francis unconsciously reconciled these conflicting claims of husband and child, by delivering Mr. Fothergill's invitation to Miss Carew.

Since Selby declined leaving town, here was a safe and honourable alternative. Under the roof of the old widower she might enjoy the fancied advantages, whatever they were, of a continued residence in London, and yet secure a respectable asylum amongst those who ought to be her natural protectors—the relations of her husband. Now it is certain that, if left to herself, Mr. Fothergill's house, so immediately in sight of her dreaded father-in-law's, was the very last residence to which Selby would have desired to resort; but observing her mother's great satisfaction at the arrangement, and how certainly she reckoned on her acceptance of the proposal, she dared not put a negative upon a scheme so seemingly unobjectionable. In appearing to acquiesce, however, and even in despatching a prettily-worded and grateful "yes" to Mr. Fothergill's formal invitation, Selby, alas! did but follow up the odious system of deceit which her unhappy position so often entailed upon her. The truth being, that she entertained not the remotest intention of staying in Great George-street; but, presuming that her mother's concerns would ere long call her elsewhere,

she returned the answer Mrs. Carew seemed to expect; reserving to herself the power of cutting short the negotiation and sending an excuse, the very moment she became her own mistress. To this end she disobeyed the advice of Mr. Francis, that she should repair to Mr. Fothergill's without delay, by fixing the evening of the day ensuing for her change of residence; for by that time she had every reason to suppose that her father and mother would be some distance on their way to some "right little, tight little island," and she at liberty to shape her own course, physically and morally, as she might think fit.

At a crisis less interesting to the Carews, the proceedings of Captain Romilly would certainly have excited more attention. Since the previous day's adventure he had grown desperate; deserted Curzon-street altogether, and passed his whole time walking within view of Mrs. Dawes's establishment: for, as he could not gain admittance under its once friendly roof, his only hope of an interview with Selby, rested on the chance of encountering the ladies in their morning's walk.

And here we must pause for a moment, to note a certain discrepancy in the sentiments of the Carews, touching the mad freaks of Selby's admirer; for while they agreed in the main upon the folly and even wickedness of his conduct, the mother regarded him with unmitigated anger—only hesitating to attribute his behaviour to gross impertinence or utter insanity; the censure of the daughter, on the contrary, was tempered with a something akin to pity—

stern wrath diluted with a driblet of mercy. The tears would rise up in her soft eyes at the idea of Miss Drake's injuries and woes: but still, "poor Romilly!"

Ah, how was it? and in what young-lady-like way did it come to pass, that—with all his sins upon his head, his shameful, his undefended, indefensible conduct—he was still "poor Captain Romilly!" with the virtuous, well-behaved Selby Carew? Was it simply that she was interested in him as her husband's friend? Or must we lay to her charge some portion of that self-love, in disguise, which renders us tender of the faults that are engendered by our own attractions?—so that the condemnation we should otherwise unflinchingly pronounce, becomes softened in its utterance, if we believe that our own charms have been the *primum mobile* in the scandal,—the weak man's stumbling-block. "But for *these* eyes, *these* curls, *this tout ensemble*," the poor wretch might have come to the end of life's weary, dreary journey, without swerving to the right or the left; but, intoxicated by *my* captivations, how could he help seeing double, or keep himself from staggering out of the formal line of duty?"

It was not that Miss Carew soliloquised in these words, or anything like them; she would, without doubt, very strenuously have disclaimed the immoral sentiment they contained: and yet, why was it that she did not echo her mother's uncompromising language, but would be still hanging her head, "all like poor Barbara," and accompanying her gravest censure with a sigh? Or why, but for some such conscious feeling, would she colour, and look so disturbed,

when Mrs. Dawes—leaving her grand preparations below, her sweepings and shakings, her scrubblings and rubbings—would be from time to time insinuating her knowing little head into the parlour, whispering, “The captain’s been here again, Miss Carew:” always addressing the younger lady on these occasions, as if by some curious instinct.

Yet with all this, young Romilly would have been sorely disconcerted had he divined how small a share he had in the thoughts of her he doated on; for with the conceit and presumption of his race and genus,—the man specified by the lover,—he set it down as a fact, that he was the sole cause and occasion of this sudden withdrawal of the Carews. Nor, however great might be his discomfiture, could he seriously blame them: he saw that, as an engaged man, his advances had been too palpable, and their delicacy had been naturally offended.

That detestable back door at the milliner’s! though in a moment of desperate danger it stood him in stead, had probably ruined him with those dear women; rendering them suspicious of his intentions. How, under these adverse circumstances, was he to place himself again in communication with them? Sometimes he thought of writing; but his case seemed altogether too desperate for an expedient so tame.

The story of his love set down in black and white, the written evidence of all that was burning within him, what would it amount to? However glowing and impassioned such thoughts might be, flowing from the living tongue, and garnished with all those indescribable nothings which are everythings in a

personal interview—"Sighs that melt and eyes that burn,"—I forget the quotation, and so did Romilly; though the jingle of the rhythm ran in his head: but he subscribed to the sentiment nevertheless, and felt that if Selby experienced anything approaching to the passion which animated him, and if they could but once be alone together, with the word "love" trembling on their lips, vibrating in their bosoms, convenience, propriety, and every other weak consideration must sink into oblivion; whilst he, in the midst of his worldly conflicts, blame, scorn, and disinheritance, would be the happiest of mortal men.

Pen, ink, and paper, forsooth! Stationery is the name by which they go; and, accordingly, words fixed and un-scratch-outable are the result of their conjunction: every sentence ready for criticism, cavil, and contradiction—pilloried, as it were, for the gaze of the scorner. Odds! pothooks and hangers! as Sir Lucius might say, there is not a sigh or a blush to be found in the whole written alphabet: one audible ejaculation—one imploring glance—is worth all the labours of Cadmus and his disciples. And so he persisted in hanging about the shrine of his idol in person, or by proxy; for his man was set to watch whenever he was off duty.

"If this young man calls again, I will see him myself," said Mrs. Carew, "and put a stop to his abominable behaviour. It is actual persecution; and is another reason, Selby, for your leaving this place as soon as possible."

Selby made no reply; the parlour door was open, and she could hear the low, deep voice of Mr. Mau-

leverer communing with Mrs. Dawes. Perhaps he expected to find the Hamiltons there already: at all events, his coming bore some reference to their movements; and she looked so startled, that her mother fancied it must be an officer in pursuit of Carew, and was for the moment still more disturbed.

With a stealthy step she ventured into the passage; when, in the man who brushed past her, carrying his master's portmanteau up-stairs, Mrs. Carew recognised an old acquaintance.

"Selby," she exclaimed, rushing back and closing the parlour door, "who do you think is here? That man, I forget his name, who was Captain Luttrell's servant at Plymouth: I remember him perfectly. What is he doing here? What can it mean?"

On this subject Selby was the most collected of the two; she mentioned the name of Mr. Hodge's present employer, and so far quieted her mother's agitation: but still, Mrs. Carew kept dwelling on the annoyance of having this man in the house with them, and the awkwardness of being recognised by him; while Selby, careless of such minor embarrassments, listened with an apathy incomprehensible to her mother. Nor could she be made to participate in the wish that they had never taken these lodgings; "for," she thought to herself, "whatever misery awaits me, here I must soon know it all."

CHAPTER IX.

ROMILLY's heart bounded with joy when, as he traversed the pavement of Maddox-street in a mood that grew every hour more desponding, he spied Mrs. Dawes mysteriously beckoning him across the way, and heard her "whisper—whisper, soft and low," that the ladies desired he might be admitted next time he happened to call: but the young man's exultation suffered a woful check on finding that he was ushered into a lower room, where Mrs. Carew awaited him, unaccompanied by Selby, and displaying a severity of countenance he had scarcely thought her capable of assuming. He perceived that the crisis of his fate was approaching; and, growing reckless in his impatience of further suspense, he met Mrs. Carew's grave inquiry as to his motives for thus haunting them—"What could be his reason? What end did he propose to himself by his strange behaviour?"—with an open declaration of his love for her daughter; having already virtually, for her sake, broken his engagement with Miss Drake.

Mrs. Carew was not prepared for so bold and insolent a measure: for as such she naturally es-

teemed it; but was glad of the opportunity, she flattered herself it afforded her, of putting an end at once to his absurd pretensions. She had, however, considerably miscalculated the force of a passion capable of leading the young man into such extravagances.

He encountered her indignation and her arguments, her plain sense or stern rebuke, with a fierce and dogged opposition: plainly defied her authority and the world's opinion; till, incited by her contempt, as well as by the false impression he had received from Carew respecting his daughter's inclinations, he refused to give up his suit, except at the instance of Selby herself: hinting, that he had reason to expect from the young lady a more favourable answer than her mother was disposed to vouchsafe him.

Mrs. Carew stood confounded at his audacity (ignorant of the hand her husband had had in it): his conduct seemed next to insanity. Its very extravagance, nevertheless, rendered it formidable: she grew actually alarmed at the anticipation of what she might leave Selby exposed to in the pursuit of this hot-headed man, and the scandalous imputation she must suffer of having encouraged his addresses; unless some means were found to convince him—not of their impropriety, for to all such reasoning he was deaf, but of their utter futility.

For a few seconds she allowed him to talk, or rather rave; while she anxiously considered the expedient (the sole one which occurred to her) of silencing him effectually. And then she spoke; and her manner grew so impressive and mysterious, and her face so pale, that, subdued as her voice was, it arrested him in

his wild career. She could not find herself uttering, even in the lowest tone, that secret, until now so carefully guarded that it had never reached a human ear, without trembling as the words fell from her lips.

“To convince you, Captain Romilly, how utterly hopeless is your pursuit of my daughter, I will confide to you a secret of the utmost consequence to her; and shall trust to your honour as a gentleman not to divulge it further—Selby is already married: she has been a wife for some years past.”

He looked at her incredulously, and then turned as white as herself. Had any one entered the room at that moment, the aspect of its two occupants must strangely have struck them, as they stood staring at each other with such a fixed and dismayed expression.

Romilly, then clinging to a desperate hope, refused to credit a fact so astounding; at all events, he would have it from Selby herself: surely if the horrid news were true, and he doomed to lose her for ever, this trifling indulgence might be shown him. No, he would not leave the house without seeing her!

Mrs. Carew submitted, though with a very bad grace, to this request; for she apprehended otherwise some uncontrollable display of violence, such as might actually disturb the household: in these small rooms with their thin partitions everything could be overheard. So, stipulating with him for composure, she withdrew, and presently reappeared with Selby; whose natural reluctance to meeting Romilly, after such a confession, she decisively overruled.

“As he refuses to believe my story, you must con-

firm it: settle the matter in two words, and get rid of him as fast as you can."

But the spirit of the mother's cold counsel predominated not in the breast of the child. Great as were the errors of this friend of Hartley's, Selby saw in him one whose prosperity, whose best prospects in life, she had probably been the means of ruining. Had not this wicked secret been so strictly kept, the mischief could never have occurred; and when she encountered his wild and haggard looks, Selby approached poor Romilly with the humility of a culprit, not the severity of a judge.

"Oh, Selby!" he mournfully asked, "can this be possible that your mother tells me?"

She gently inclined her head assentingly, and then, in the sweetest accents, entreated him to forgive her for the error into which she had unconsciously led him.

"Till yesterday," said she, "I never dreamed of anything serious in your attentions. Indeed, Captain Romilly, it was innocently done!"

Quite subdued by her presence, he looked at her with a fond melancholy, and replied—

"Your protestations are needless: there lives not the human being who could look in your face and suspect you of one evil thought or intention. I alone have been to blame; though you must pardon my saying that your father gave me a very different impression of your position, and even of your inclinations."

The Carews looked at each other in extreme surprise.

“Nay,” he continued, “I do not speak for the purpose of useless recrimination. I merely wish to show you that my conduct was not so utterly wild, or my hopes so groundless, as they must have seemed to you.”

In justice to her father, Selby was anxious to explain that her peculiar situation was up to that very moment as much a mystery to him as to the rest of the world; but the bitter tone in which Mrs. Carew apostrophised her absent John, showed how thoroughly *she* penetrated the motives which had influenced his proceedings. It was hard to her to meet with yet another instance of her husband's innate worthlessness, just as she was abandoning everything to follow him into a disreputable exile! She stood swelling with anger and vexation, and thinking of Mr. Whitaker; while Romilly availed himself of the short cessation of maternal watchfulness, to pour forth the agonies of his disappointment, remorse, and despair; and Selby, as eloquently as she could, kept urging the claims of Miss Drake.

“Don't persuade me,” he cried, “for I can refuse you nothing; and if I am forced back to Sophia, it will only be to leave her the next day, or blow my brains out, as a last resource.”

“For Heaven's sake don't talk so wildly! don't give me the misery of knowing that I am an object of jealousy to any unfortunate creature: I should never forgive myself—never be happy again!”

It was while they were thus talking, that a loud rapping, and an immediate scuffle and tumult in the passage, forced Selby's thoughts into the old channel.

“ They are come !” she exclaimed, changing colour.
“ It ’s the Hamiltons !”

“ Never mind them,” said Romilly. “ No, no ; don’t go ! Don’t leave me ! Remember it is the last time I shall perhaps ever see you.”

“ Excuse me,” said she, nervously ; “ I must go : pray excuse me. I wish you every happiness and—— good-morning, Captain Romilly.”

He caught her hand as she was passing out ; but her mother interposed, scolding him, and whispering to her to get up-stairs as fast as possible.

This was a moment, however, in which mothers and lovers possessed but slight influence over Selby Carew : she rushed into the passage, it is true ; but it was only to stop at the foot of the staircase and watch what was passing in the street. Mrs. Dawes, all flutter and excitement, catching a glimpse of Romilly as she was running to the door, adjured him to give his assistance towards helping Mr. Hamilton into the house.

Now Mr. Mauleverer and his servant were there, besides the Hamiltons’ own attendants, so that there was really no occasion for further help ; but Mrs. Dawes, enchanted at the unusual bustle which the arrival of the sick man created at her door, lost no opportunity of increasing it ; so she hurried the captain to the door of the carriage. And even he could not refuse some sympathy when his eyes encountered the death-like figure of his old friend and companion-in-arms ; for Mr. Hamilton had fainted, and his utter helplessness increased the difficulty of removing him from the carriage. It also served to heighten

the secret exultation of his landlady: with a tear in her eye, and a lamentation on her lips, she stole an occasional glance at the little crowd that was already collecting to stare at the dead gentleman—for in that light most of the spectators were happy enough to regard him; while the soft-hearted of the throng contemplated with respectful compassion the pale but beautiful lady, who stood on the pavement so haughtily regardless of their observation: so absorbed, no doubt, in the care of her poor sick husband. There was one sentimental apprentice amongst them who was afterwards heard to declare, that he would willingly have changed conditions with Mrs. Dawes's suffering lodger, to have found himself the object of such devoted attention from that regal-looking beauty.

Very different were the feelings of Selby Carew, as she surveyed the scene without. In the intensity of her pity for one of the party, and her abhorrence of the other, she suffered herself to whisper strange words in the ear of her mother.

“Murdered! murdered!” she repeated: “and see! she can endure to look upon him! Oh, mama! is it not frightful?”

Mrs. Carew drew her daughter away, from what she simply imagined to be a scene too melancholy for her already excited nerves: but still, as she urged her up the stairs, Selby mounted with an unwilling step, and her head was turned to bestow yet another glance upon that dismal group; and, when it was no longer in sight, she threw herself on the sofa, and wept with passionate vehemence.

“You take the misfortunes of these poor people

too much to heart," said her mother, soothingly: "we have sorrows enough of our own, my Selby, without weeping over those of a common acquaintance."

"Don't suppose I am grieving for *her*!" said Selby, raising herself with an almost fierce expression—"Her, whom I look upon as the basest of women!"

"What! this Mrs. Hamilton?" inquired the other; and Selby, moderating her tone as she saw her mother's surprised look, replied—

"Yes; I don't much like her: she is not at all a nice person."

It was impossible that the shrewd and penetrating Charlotte Carew should not be somewhat struck with all this; but she had a world of business to accomplish before the waning of that day, which prevented her from indulging in what seemed to her an idle curiosity: she was continually receiving letters and messages from her husband; and, what she esteemed far more to the purpose, Mr. Whitaker came to give her his latest advice, and make all the arrangements necessary for her departure the following day.

And, luckily, on this point Selby could display a decent sympathy. The relief to her of her mother's absence would be, she thought, inexpressible: she only wished it were sooner to take place; for she was haunted with the idea that Luttrell's arrival would follow close on that of the Hamiltons, and beyond all things, she dreaded lest he and her mother should encounter each other.

Yet, afraid as she was of exciting Mrs. Carew's curiosity, and entailing a course of embarrassing

questions, Selby found it impossible to conquer the sort of fascination which all the proceedings of the Hamiltons possessed over her: enticing her to watch and listen, and seek to gather from every slight indication what was passing below; and whether the scared looks of the attendants, as they whispered and shook their heads together, or moved on tiptoe from the invalid's room, announced his approaching death, or only his continuance in that ghastly swoon.

A double knock at the street door was especially sure to send her out upon the landing-place with a beating heart; and there were many of these, as the various physicians summoned to this mournful case made their appearance: for it is but just to Mrs. Hamilton to say, that if the sincerity of a wife's attachment is to be tested by the number and distinction of the medical men she assembles round the deathbed of her husband, the strength and tenderness of hers admitted of no dispute.

“Such eminent practitioners!” to quote the exact words of Mrs. Dawes, as she whispered her mournful ecstasies in the ears of the old charwoman, her particular confidant: “two Sirs at least amongst them—which, you know, Betty, is next to nobility; and such equipages, all standing at my poor little door at the self-same moment!”

How unconscious was Mrs. Dawes, as she said this, of her advantages in living at the beginning of the 19th century, when broughams and pill-boxes were vehicles undreamt of by the Faculty! Then came the ready rejoinder,—

“Ah, Mrs. Dawes, if ever there was a poor, dear,

sick gentleman well taken care of and beautifully nursed in his latter days——”

“ Yes, Betty, you may say that ! And, by-the-bye, did you happen to hear what message came from Great George-street ? for I know somebody was sent to ask whether the captain was come home yet—a friend of the invalid’s, Betty, and the good gentleman can’t die in peace till he has seen him.”

But time presses, and we must hurry over that night of suffering and suspense below, and of agonizing thought above stairs.

In the morning, the Carews learned that Mr. Hamilton still lived, and was even sensible ; but that, though it was possible he might linger till night, his dissolution was to be hourly expected.

Again Mrs. Carew had to marvel at the avidity with which Selby listened to the minute details—which their little landlady and her maid were only too happy to forward to them—of what was passing in the sick chamber ; and especially to note the scorn and repugnance that overshadowed her fair face, whenever any mention was made of the wonderful fortitude and resignation exhibited by Mrs. Hamilton on this trying occasion. Her mother perceived there was some mystery in all this ; but nowise suspecting its real nature or importance, she suffered it to pass with little comment. It was not long, however, ere a clue was afforded her, by which to penetrate and fully comprehend the reason of Selby’s strange behaviour.

During the early part of the morning she had been busy paying bills, and despatching, with her usual

foresight and promptitude, the few things that still remained to be attended to previous to her leaving London:—she was to meet Carew, at three o'clock, at the inn from whence the night coach to Southampton took its departure—when, finding that Mrs. Dawes, with whom she had occasion to speak, was slow in answering her summons, Mrs. Carew thought she would expedite the matter by going down stairs to seek her.

She descended accordingly, calling gently upon her little hostess, but calling in vain; doubtless the worthy woman was engaged in the sick-chamber, and Mrs. Carew was too considerate to disturb her: but before returning up-stairs, she looked into Mrs. Dawes's own little private room on the opposite side of the passage; and though the place was vacant, she was reminded, by the sight of pen and ink on the table and certain old cards on the mantelpiece, that this would be a good opportunity for writing the directions necessary for her luggage. Perhaps by the time "Mrs. Carew, Passenger," had been thrice engrossed, in a strong and legible character, Mrs. Dawes might make her voluntary appearance on the scene.

So, in fact, it proved; for scarcely had Mrs. Carew dipped her pen into the ink, when the voice of that alert person became audible, as if she had just left the opposite chamber. Mrs. Carew started up to meet her, but paused as suddenly; for Mrs. Dawes was summoning Mr. Mauleverer's man from the kitchen, and Mrs. Carew had not the smallest inclination, for reasons quite as well known to the reader

as herself, for encountering this memento of Quin's Folly—and all the rest of the folly—face to face. So, thinking to secure Mrs. Dawes when she had given her directions to this person, the first-floor lodger quietly subsided into her seat, and proceeded with the second edition of "Mrs. Carew, Passenger, Southampton."

Now this little, *very* little parlour, appropriated to the ruling power of the establishment, was so situated as to open exactly upon the head of the kitchen stairs; and, without the remotest wish or intention of doing so, Mrs. Carew, sitting at her quiet employment behind the door, heard necessarily (that door being half open) whatever was said on the other side of it.

For a second or two, Mrs. Dawes's consequential demand for the instant attendance of Mr. Hodges was unnoticed; the delay being eventually explained by the said Hodges mounting the stairs with his mouth extremely full. He was accosted immediately.

"I say, Mr. Hodges, you are wanted directly to go to Great George-street."

"What, again!" was the answer. "Why, I've been there three times already."

"Only once this morning; so none of that, Thomas, if you please. And now mind what I'm telling you: you are to ask particular whether or no the captain's come, and——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said he, peevishly.

"No, you do *not* know, Mr. Hodges, clever as you think yourself. Now, look here; you are to give this

note into his own hands, if he should happen to be come; and if not, you are to leave it, with strict directions that it is to be given him the very moment he arrives."

"What! before he has had time to kiss his papa and mama?"

"There is no talk of kissing in any part of the matter, Mr. Hodges."

"Oh, very well, Mrs. Dawes."

"Now, Tom, don't be a fool, but listen to me: you are to be sure to say it's a matter of life and death."

"Ay, ay—give me the note: it's not the first time I have carried billy-dooes to my old master, I can tell you that."

"Now, Thomas, I desire you'll not say such things. Ain't you ashamed of it—and that poor dear angel dying there almost within hearing of you? But you always were the sauciest fellow! I was in hopes a serious service might have done something for you; but you are worse than ever. Will you be quiet now? you'll push me down-stairs, you will, Thomas. Oh, Tom, Tom!"

Then there was a slight scuffle and a subdued giggling; of all which sprightly demonstrations, when Mr. Hodges had departed on his errand, and Mrs. Dawes was made aware of the vicinity of her first floor lodger, the little woman was considerably ashamed: especially as, from the heightened colour and determined eye of Mrs. Carew, she expected something like a lecture on the glaring impropriety of her conduct.

She was relieved to find that lady only desirous of a little information.

“ Was *the* captain, of whom she had been speaking with reference to Great George-street, Captain Luttrell, of the —— regiment ? ”

“ The very same : son and heir of the great Mr. Luttrell, of —— shire,” Mrs. Dawes chimed in ; being ready to satisfy all inquiries disconnected with her dishevelled cap and conscious blushes. “ Captain Luttrell was a prodigious friend of Mr. Hamilton’s—the greatest friend he had, poor, dear gentleman!—”

“ Oh ! yes,” was the reply, “ I am quite aware *whose* friend he is ; I have heard,” (with decided emphasis it was said) “ every word that passed between you and Mr. Mauleverer’s servant.”

“ Oh, have you, ma’am ? ” said Mrs. Dawes, hesitating, and looking sheepish.

We may give the good woman credit for some reluctance in compromising her old mistress, but it was not proof against the strong will of her interrogator, joined to her own innate love of gossip ; so that, though she began by professions of unbounded consideration for Mrs. Hamilton, as the best of wives and tenderest of nurses, she ended by pushing the door to, and giving Mrs. Carew fully to understand, by means of anecdote and inference, the sort of feeling she supposed to exist between her former mistress and Captain Luttrell—“ a charming lady, beautiful and accomplished, and quite a pattern for her sex : but, speaking confidentially (and as Mrs. Carew was related by marriage to the captain, of course it would go no further), even the nicest of ladies would

shew their little partialities in their husband's regiment ; and, thereupon, folks would be apt to talk.

“ But she, Mrs. Dawes, who knew Mrs. Hamilton as well as if they had been sisters, took upon her to say that she would never do anything that was unbecoming ; and would wear her weeds the proper time, before she bethought of providing herself with a successor to that dear, suffering saint in the room beyond,”—an assertion, however, which the conscientious little Dawes hastened to qualify, by adding—“ for you know, ma'am, people don't mourn so long now by many months as they used to do : it isn't thought good for the shopkeepers !”

Mrs. Carew assented to everything with a freezing smile, while her whole frame trembled with suppressed indignation.

Here, then, was a full and fearful explanation of Selby's contrarieties of conduct ; her obstinate refusal to leave London, and her excitement about the Hamiltons.

“ Poor thing ! what must she not be suffering !” and Mrs. Carew could hardly restrain herself in the presence of Mrs. Dawes ; so lamentable appeared the prospects of her daughter, and so deeply did she repent that error she had committed in forcing Selby into a union with a man unworthy of her. For the tenderness towards Hartley Luttrell, which might lead his wife to excuse him, and throw upon Mrs. Hamilton the chief odium of their supposed attachment, being utterly unshared by her mother, Mrs. Carew was disposed to regard everything in its broadest and most scandalous light.

The fact of these Hamiltons being acquainted with his movements, when his wife was kept in utter ignorance of them, had certainly a suspicious look : nay, it even seemed that Luttrell's own family were less fully informed than this dangerous woman and her dying husband ; as, according to Mrs. Dawes, the household in Great George-street were yet uncertain when to expect him, while Mrs. Hamilton reckoned on his coming that very day.

Their meeting could admit of no innocent construction : it was simply an assignation, for which the situation of Mr. Hamilton afforded scarcely a decent pretence.

Mrs. Carew's first impulse was to fly to Selby, and ascertain all that she knew or suspected ; but painful experience had long ago convinced her how little their feelings were in unison on any point relating to the Luttrells ; and to enter abruptly on the subject now, would be only to induce some miserable dispute, for which she had neither time nor inclination. She checked herself the more readily since she fancied that, without any formal explanation, she had observed alteration enough in Selby's manner to corroborate, to their fullest extent, the inuendoes of Mrs. Dawes : she was quite convinced, from many a slight but sure indication, that Selby had ceased to place her old implicit reliance on her absent lord's stability ; and that which might be only a passing doubt in the mind of the wife, was conviction to the mother-in-law. She believed her unhappy child to be on the point of desertion, and thought over all the treachery she had heard and read of—the destroying

of letters and documents—suborning of witnesses—the bribing of parish clerks—the tearing-out leaves of parish registers: she conjured up these instances of man's depravity, and of the facility with which he can compass his worst designs, till her impetuous nature was thoroughly roused; and that which had formerly startled even her, when it had presented itself as a possible expedient for the prevention of further mischief, seemed now the only thing to satisfy her, or give her a moment's peace.

Had Selby's mind been sufficiently disengaged for observation, she must have been struck with her mother's manner—the length of time she shut herself into her own room without explaining what occupied her; and, when they were together, the desponding looks, and tearful caresses she bestowed upon her: but Selby had been made aware by this time of the messages which were being despatched to Great George-street, and could think of little besides.

All she could do was, to be sorry for the affectionate uneasiness she was exciting, and very grateful; and very anxious to get rid of mama as soon as possible: for even in the height of her maternal fondness, such a proud, fierce look would occasionally cross Mrs. Carew's features—such a distension of the nostril, such a swelling of the bosom and biting of the lip!

Selby could not penetrate all that was passing in her mother's mind, but she guessed enough to feel certain, that, if she were now to encounter Captain Luttrell, her long-cherished anger would burst forth: no consideration of policy, or respect for the feelings of her daughter—not even the shadow of

death now hovering round the house—would suffice to restrain the expression of her resentment. But, happily, amongst Selby's many trials, this mortification was spared her: Luttrell came not, and his mother-in-law left Maddox-street without encountering him.

One marked display of feeling, one short ebullition, did escape her at the parting moment. As they stood locked in each other's arms, Mrs. Carew suddenly raised her head from her daughter's shoulder, and said to her, "Selby, I have forborne to enter on that subject so interesting to us both, because we can never agree upon it; but now, in this miserable moment, when Heaven only knows what may happen before we meet again, I solemnly entreat you, as you value my happiness and your own future respectability, to make me one promise, and adhere to it inviolably!"

Selby looked inquiringly in her mother's face, and then murmured—"If it relates to nothing that immediately touches him."

"Yes," replied the other, firmly, "my request points entirely at him. I doubt his family; but he himself is the real object of my mistrust. Selby, whatever happens to you, whatever may be the menaces or the endearments employed to persuade you, be sure never to trust your wedding-certificate out of your own keeping: your fair fame rests on the preservation of that paper—give it up, and you are lost!"

Selby blushed crimson, as she shrank from her mother's arms: "Oh, mama! is it possible that even *you* can suspect him so basely?"

“ Ha ! ” cried Mrs. Carew, passionately, “ the old infatuation ! But I have done my duty in warning you ; and,” she added, speaking rather to herself than her daughter, “ I will do it to the end ! ” And thus parted the mother and child.

CHAPTER X.

THERE is a certain state of mind which in the present day is popularly termed "excitement;" and as the word is common to all classes, and is applied indiscriminately to man, woman, child, and baby-in-arms; and as it is a fact acknowledged by many besides Miss Martineau, that a majority *must* in every case be in the right; we feel assured that it is not merely good in itself and in its original meaning, but is applicable to every possible purpose, and every description of person. Therefore, I would not be understood to cast any slur on this word "excitement," by observing that, in ordinary cases, it conveys exactly the meaning that was expressed in my younger days, by saying that a person had the "fidgets."

Now, Mr. Fothergill's state of mind and body, during the interval which elapsed between the despatch of his invitation to Miss Carew and the delivery of her answer, was a forcible example of this nervous condition; which, to the end of its being thoroughly comprehended, not only by my enlightened contemporaries, but also by the few old grannies

still fondly clinging to the phraseology of their generation, I have described under both the old and the new terms—"powerfully excited"—"uncommon fidgety"—as the case may be.

In the caution of his timid character, he did not think fit to acquaint Miss Marsham with the negotiation while it was yet pending; but no sooner was he assured of his success, and had read twice over their fair cousin's polite acceptance of his offer of bed and board, than he immediately enlightened Fanny with the agreeable news: and highly satisfactory he knew it would be to her, to have the promise of such a young and unexceptionable companion: one, of whose beauty and various merits he had so often heard her speak with enthusiasm.

For some lively demonstrations, therefore, he was fully prepared: for jumping and skipping, and disordering "the arrangement of my furniture," turning up the corners of the hearth-rug, and causing the mandarins' heads to vibrate alarmingly—all this he expected; but not the sort of tone which Fanny really did assume on the occasion; for scarcely had he reached the end of his little set-speech, explanatory of coming events, than she uttered an absolute scream of surprise, staring full upon him, and raising her little hands, and exclaiming, "Miss Carew coming to stay? What! coming to stay here? In this house? Good gracious! Oh, la! *What* will Miss Drake say to that? Oh, what *will* she say?"

Mr. Fothergill thought it consisted with his dignity—as master of himself, his house, spare beds, and freedom of action—to intimate mildly, that though he

held Lady Sarah Wigram and Miss Drake in great respect, as old and esteemed friends, he could not possibly defer to their opinion touching the formation of his family party: in fact, the old gentleman was on the very point of saying, in direct terms, that he did not perceive what business it could be of theirs; but the spirited rejoinder was lost on Fanny.

“ Oh, as for the old lady,” said she, “ I wasn’t thinking about her—*she*’s of no consequence at all; it’s Sophy I am talking about—the honourable Sophia, and somebody else!—somebody else!—somebody else!” And with that she gave three skips upon the rug, which actually achieved what Mr. Fothergill’s prophetic soul had previously foreseen: up went two of its corners, and while he proceeded carefully to pat them down, she was running across the room, opening her writing-desk with a desperate jerk, and beginning in some real haste, and much affectation of it, to scribble off a note, to be immediately conveyed to Curzon-street. It was short—mysterious—and thus it ran:—

“ My dear, dear Miss Drake,—Don’t be frightened, but something has happened—at least is going to happen—which I think you *ought* (ought, with one dash under it) to be made acquainted with directly. SHE (she, with two dashes) is coming here—into this very house—this horrid 47, to stay with us for perhaps a week perhaps longer. She comes to-morrow, and I am sure it would not be right for me to leave you in ignorance of such a thing, being the only one in your confidence, and able to advise you. How oddly everything seems to be turning

out, does it not, dear Miss Drake? I am all agitation when I think of it, especially in connection with what occurred *yesterday*: but I will not make allusions on paper, for fear of accidents—only one thing is certain, you may soon discover the truth of *something* with respect to *somebody*, which has been such a puzzle to us both. I will be with you early to-morrow, if possible, and be sure to send you a line should *anything* transpire; or, if you should be inclined to look in in the evening, at dreadful 47, you will be certain of finding us at home—this being the night that all the old frumps come to play cards. Of course, dear Miss Drake, you will know what is best to be done in such a particular case as this, and, in the mean time, I remain, dearest, yours, in the greatest flurry that ever was known, F. M.”—and then the important little missive was sealed and despatched with all the more bustle, that Fanny well perceived how narrowly all her movements were being watched by Mr. Fothergill.

It would have been much to the honour of Miss Marsham’s discretion, and illustrative of the high principle inculcated at Latham House, if she had left the old gentleman still chafing against the angles of his perplexity; but though there must be a certain amount of conscious pleasure in the possession of a secret, no outward glorification will accrue to you on that account, unless you can make it apparent to some other living and reasonable soul that you are its sole depository.

As far as this, therefore, Fanny could not deny herself the satisfaction of going; she would intimate

just, and only just enough to excite still further the curiosity of her host and entertainer, for that "would be fun," and would serve besides to impress him properly with the extraordinary influence she was exerting over the private affairs of the great heiress of Curzon-street: "he would be *so* surprised!"

But the craft of sixteen was no match for the cunning of sixty; and perhaps, after all, he was scarcely more anxious to hear the secret than she to tell it. So after some pumping in a quiet way on one side, and a decent pretence of reserve on the other, Fanny, approaching the subject with masonic solemnity, swore her old friend to secrecy; and then Mr. Fothergill, quivering with curiosity, was told that Miss Drake was "in *such* a way! oh, *such* a way! about Miss Carew and the captain!"

"Really!" was the anxious rejoinder. "What! a little jealousy, my dear?"

"A great deal, sir!" said Fanny, emphatically: "but you mustn't mention it again."

He murmured some exclamations of innocent surprise: slow as he always was at entertaining a new idea, this, in its perfect novelty, had to settle a little while on the surface of his brain, ere it could sink deeper and become to him a veritable fact.

"Dear me! only to think of that. Jealous! a little jealous! and of the captain! Well, I declare!"

"You haven't forgotten those hysterics yesterday?" said Fanny, moving her low stool close to his knee, and looking up in his face very gravely.

"I shall never lose the recollection of them to my dying day!" he replied, looking down upon her with

equal solemnity : "but that has nothing to do with what we are discussing, Miss Fanny, eh, my dear?"

"Sir," said Fanny, "I give you my word of honour, that if it had not been for Charles Romilly and Selby Carew, she 'd never have had one of them. She wouldn't indeed, Mr. Fothergill! Oh, no, that she never would!"

At this the old widower's delicate complexion turned all over of one uniform pink, and he faintly exclaimed,—

"You don't say so, Miss Marsham!"

"Yes, but I do though," said his young informer ; "and I could tell you more than that, for it's quite surprising what I know: I could tell you a great deal more."

"Suppose you do, then, my dear," was the brisk reply ; "I should be really obleeged to you if you would." (Mr. Fothergill had never associated with John Kemble, so he followed the Prince Regent's pronunciation.)

"Ah, but think of my honour, Mr. Fothergill!" said Fanny, pressing her hand forcibly on her left side ; "trusted as I am, and in everybody's confidence, how can I, sir? It wouldn't be right: now, do you think yourself that it would?"

The old gentleman paused for an answer casuistical enough to serve his purpose; but ere he found one, Fanny was half way through her revelations. —"What! didn't he know about Mr. Francis? What! not about him and Miss Carew? La! I found it out in no time. Oh, everybody thinks she'll be Esther's mama-in-law. *My* mama's quite

sure of it; and so is Esther, or she wouldn't be so cross. And then there's that naughty Sir William Gascoigne! How he used to stare at my cousin, and pretend it was all from respect to the memory of his first wife! nobody else could see the least bit of likeness between them. Oh, you can't think, Mr. Fothergill, how unhappy it made her poor, dear ladyship! Not that my cousin Selby could help it, if he chose to stare; only, still people did make remarks."

Thus she ran on, a secret enjoyment of the uneasiness she was creating inciting her to reveal, and even exaggerate, all she actually knew, had guessed, or heard hinted; but the climax of everything was the adventure at the milliner's, and the consequent illness of Miss Drake.

To an auditor even less precise in his notions of female propriety, the narrative, in its simplest form, must have worn a suspicious aspect; but Fanny Marsham being the narrator, and Mr. Fothergill the recipient of the story, its effect was astounding: the pinky tint in the old gentleman's round plump cheeks turned crimson as she proceeded, and his light blue eyes opened to their utmost extent. Just such might be the helpless, hopeless stare of some shepherd, too gentle, alas! or too stupid for his calling; when, with his own hands opening the door of his fold, he perceives that it is the wolf which enters, and not the sheep-dog!

There sat his innocent lamb—for in that character he persisted in regarding her, albeit his thoughts did wander more than once to that officer in the Blues and the red-whiskered haberdasher—and he asked him-

self how he should answer it to her mother, or even his own conscience, to give Fanny such a companion as this Miss Carew was reported to be? A flirt—a wanton—a seducer of old and young; to whose insatiate appetite for admiration the holiest ties and most solemn obligations were sacrificed.

His immediate impulse was to decline the young lady's visit: but what plea was he to put forward for his change of mind, or how explain himself satisfactorily to the Luttrels? who, as they had *all* advised of this invitation being given, might *all* be affronted by his refusing to have her. He could only vindicate himself, by accusing her of impropriety so great as to justify him in shutting his doors against her; and then what a serious thing it appeared to his cautious nature and habits of strict decorum, to utter any reflection that might sully the reputation of a lady!

Still, something must be determined on, or he should not sleep a wink that night; and, as a medium between two startling extremes, he bethought him of laying open his perplexities to the friendly ear of Mrs. Luttrell: she, ever gentle and considerate, would at once help him with her best advice, and share some portion of his heavy responsibilities.

Here again, however, he was destined to be foiled: for, on sending over to know if she was disengaged, and would grant him her private attention, he received for answer, the excuse, that Mrs. Luttrell was in hourly expectation of the arrival of her son; and was, consequently, in such anxiety and agitation of spirits, that, unless Mr. Fothergill's business were of

the very last importance, she must beg for the present to decline seeing even so old a friend: instead of calling in person, perhaps he would have the goodness to write.

But Mr. Fothergill could not bring himself to put pen to paper on a matter of such extreme delicacy: the business must be done by hint and inuendo, whispered to the ear of one friendly adviser, and not by a broad assertion under his own handwriting; which, if adduced hereafter, might go near to convict him of slander and defamation.

The affair must be suffered to rest for that day; and he consoled himself by hoping that the captain would soon arrive, and Mrs. Luttrell be composed enough to attend to him next morning: moreover, the old gentleman reflected that, on the occasion of so joyful a meeting, the family would naturally be in too good a humour, to be very severe on him or his proceedings. So, altogether, though still nervous at times, especially after talking the matter over again and again with Fanny, he went to rest; trusting that his difficulties might be overcome without actually affronting Miss Carew, or compromising him with either the Luttrells or his friends in May Fair. It would have better pleased him, had he been certified of Captain Luttrell's arrival that same night; but, though he and Fanny kept a sharp look out whenever the roll of a carriage was heard, no travelling equipage, the only species of vehicle to interest them just then, was observed to stop at the Luttrells' door.

Morning came, and the answer to his anxious

inquiries was still the same; Captain Luttrell had not arrived. The fact was, that no direct communication from Hartley had as yet reached his family; but the messages, which Mrs. Hamilton was continually despatching to Great George-street, implied so positive an expectation of his approach, that the family generally, and his mother in particular, had little doubt of his being at least on the road; and thus they were kept in a state of suspense, that sadly interfered with the settlement of Mr. Fothergill's private arrangements.

Dilatory and undecided as he always was, he found himself, being thus abandoned to his own resources, quite unable to determine what was best to be done; and, much as he repented having asked the fair Carew to visit him, he could hit upon no plan for getting politely rid of her. Each hour that slipped away rendered all decent expedients more unavailable; and while Fanny, unconscious or careless of his perplexities, kept gaily anticipating the arrival of her charming cousin, he gradually settled down into the hopeless conviction that, as Buonaparte would have said, "his destiny must be fulfilled:" come she would, and come she must; and he must succumb to the will of woman, as he had often done before.

As he arrived at this state of resignation, Fanny, who was seldom absent many minutes from the window, exclaimed that there was a post-chaise in sight.

"And I do think it's coming over the way. It's going to stop at the Luttrells: it is, indeed, Mr. Fothergill. Oh, do come and look!"

Mr. Fothergill waited no second reminder, but,

hastening his usual little toddling footsteps to an old-gentlemanly trot, neared the window in a trice, and, for a time, lost the sense of his personal embarrassments, in the pleasing occupation of watching his neighbours' proceedings. In fact, the captain's return was a topic of such common interest to all connected with the Luttrels, that now he did not even preserve his usual delicacy in peeping behind the blind, but, boldly putting on his spectacles, vied with the little Marsham in making observations on what was passing over the way.

Much did they both regret that the respective mansions were not more immediately fronting each other; for they had to gaze sideways, and the view was but oblique after all: and though Mr. Fothergill might rest contented with the slight glance he could obtain of Captain Luttrell, in his transit from the chaise to the house, and then find almost equal amusement in watching the removal of his cloak and portmanteau, the fair disciple of Latham House was longing for a more particular view of the individual man; wondering whether he was still as handsome as that picture that Mrs. Hamilton was so fond of looking at, and whether the Luttrels would give a ball to celebrate his return.

The chaise, the prime object of remark, had driven off, yet the watchers at No. 47 still lingered at their post; for, lo! another vehicle had succeeded it at the Luttrels' door,—Lady Sarah Wigram's chariot.

What an unlucky time to have chosen for her call! But she could not expect to be admitted at

such a season, certainly not: there is plainly a demur; the footman perplexed, the butler himself running out to confer with her ladyship, and explain the present position of affairs. Then, after a little delay, implying a doubt as to the next course of proceeding, the servants bow themselves off, and the carriage wheels round, and stops at Mr. Fothergill's door.

His conscience tells him she is coming for no purpose but to take him solemnly to task respecting his negotiation with Miss Carew, and fain would he have averted the storm by having himself denied to her.

"Not at home, John! not at home, on any account." The inhospitable command is faltering on his tongue, but is issued a moment too late: Lady Sarah has been already admitted; and, in addition to the censure he anticipates, he grows grievously afraid lest his fair cousin should arrive with bag and baggage, and come in actual contact with the ancient Wigram.

His very soul quails at the thought; not so much of the encounter in itself, but of its taking place at No. 47. Even Lady Sarah's good-breeding, he imagines, may give way at sight of this arch-seducer: in his disturbance, indeed, he can form no clear conception of the probabilities of the case; but there comes a confused vision of what he calls a "scandal, an indecent scandal!" in his orderly mansion—female susceptibilities awakened, and women's voices raised far above concert pitch, loud enough to reach the servants; then more hysterics, and, perhaps, a doctor to be sent for.

It would have been his wisest plan to have waived the subject, at least till he had sounded Lady Sarah discreetly ; but, in the extremity of his agitation, he blundered upon it at once : and very soon, by his unnecessary allusions and apologies, discovered all that was passing in his bewildered mind.

Now, it was this conduct of the old gentleman's that completed the measure of poor Lady Sarah's mortification. She had not had the slightest intention of saying anything to Mr. Fothergill about her niece's affairs ; she merely came to use his house as a resting-place, where she might sit and recruit her troubled spirits, till she could be admitted to a consultation with Mr. Luttrell : for, by this time, she had become thoroughly aware of the precarious state of Miss Drake's engagement with Charles Romilly.

The indignant and miserable Sophia, who had kept her secret thus far—hoping she might, at least, have the poor consolation of seeming to reject the man who had insulted her—saw the hours glide away without bringing her any tidings of the captain : no explanation, no excuse : he neither came nor wrote to her ; till, chafed beyond endurance, her sullen nature gave way, and she confided her griefs to her good old aunt.

In that hour of humiliation, she had clung like a child round Lady Sarah's neck, and had found in her affectionate sympathy the sole comfort she was capable of receiving ; and what the united counsels of many a wiser friend, including all her bridesmaids, from Fanny Marsham up to the odious Miss Tyrwhit, or the Lady Mary Sackville herself, could

scarcely have supplied. For Lady Sarah, with all her absurdity, her rouge and ringlets, was still at heart a kind christian and a true gentlewoman; and, while she did what lay in her power to soothe the agonised spirit of her niece, she strongly recommended an instant and dignified dismissal of Captain Romilly.

She was loth, nevertheless, to carry through the affair, without acquainting Mr. Luttrell with the determination at which her niece had arrived; it would be, she thought, the height of indecorum to leave him ignorant of so important a change in the intentions of his ward: and then, perhaps, who could tell whether some material good might not result from her visit to Great George-street? Mr. Luttrell might have communicated with Romilly; he had promised to do so; and things that now looked strangely suspicious might yet be capable of explanation: for, punctilious as the old lady was in points of love and courtship, she also had a tender feeling towards the captain, and desired nothing so much as to see him honourably acquitted of every evil imputation, and again upon good terms with Miss Drake.

Under these circumstances, it was a great annoyance to her to find herself excluded from the Luttrells; for she knew the state of suspense in which she had left Sophia, and sickened at the idea of returning home without one word of news, either to inspire her with hope or confirm her spirited resolutions: and when, in addition to all this, she had the mortification of hearing poor Sophy's affairs brought

forward so unceremoniously, and found herself most unexpectedly called upon to discuss, with her gossiping friend and his school-girl associate, all those interesting particulars which it was the most earnest wish of herself and her niece to have buried in oblivion, the trial became too much for her. She strove to elude the subject, but neither of her companions possessed delicacy enough to take the hint; then she grew peevish, snubbed the head of the household, and spoke so sharply to Miss Marsham that she made her cry; lastly, Lady Sarah, drawing out her own handkerchief, applied it to her eyes. We say "lastly," for, as far as Mr. Fothergill was concerned, at this point did the scene terminate: mumbling something about Hoskins and sal volatile, he shuffled out of the room, nor stopped for breath even when he had attained the cool and silent circumference of his entrance-hall; for, calm as it looked, he felt it to be no resting-place for him.

At that very point of time, Miss Carew's hackney-coachman might have his hand upon the knocker, and she be waiting for admittance, in all the assurance of a favoured guest: to escape, for the present, a personal meeting with that fair but suspected individual; to avoid the interchange of civility, such as must, he thought, pledge him to receive and countenance her—thereby destroying his ancient friendly alliance with Curzon-street,—this was his first object; and he hesitated not at adopting a very decided measure to secure it.

"Give me my hat, John, and open the door—" such was his direction to the old footman; who, in

evident surprise, was observing his movements, and whose offer to accompany his master was repelled with a mysterious motion of the hand.

The latch upraised, the old gentleman shot out of his house across the road, at a pace which, in conjunction with the unusual disorder of his manner, sent John to disseminate his observations amongst the household, and to marvel what could have driven master out at this time of day, “so red in the face, and all of a twitter like!”

Since the youthful days of Mr. Fothergill, when he had trundled a quiet hoop in Kensington Gardens, he had never been known to run so fast as on this particular occasion: had the image of Miss Drake pursued him, bearing the head of Medusa surmounted by Lady Sarah’s Tilney hat, he could hardly have done the thing in better style, or have gone straighter to the point—that point, we need scarcely say, was the opposite house of his cousins, the Luttrels.

His case struck him as far too desperate for the observance of an idle punctilio; they had been the means of plunging him into his present dilemma, and it was only fair that they should do something towards his extrication: at all events, he must unburthen his labouring mind; must seek companionship and sympathy, and shun the direful chance of witnessing a fracas between Lady Sarah and Miss Carew; so he stumbled up the opposite steps and knocked at the door—with all the greater tribulation, that two hackney-coaches were at that moment rumbling up the street, either of which might be

supposed to contain the person and packages of his fair torment.

There was considerable hesitation in the looks of the servant who opened the door to Mr. Fothergill, for well he knew how little such an intrusion would be welcomed by the family ; and he ventured respectfully to hint that the captain had only just arrived—not above a quarter of an hour ago, if so much as that—perhaps Mr. Fothergill might not be aware of the fact?” But he was interrupted with the tremulous reply,—

“ Yes, yes, Robinson, I know all about it, and I am sorry to break in at such a season ; but there is a matter of great importance depending, and I must see your mistress, or some of the family, if it is only for a few minutes.”

“ I will take your message to the ladies, sir,” said Robinson, surveying the visitor with a curious eye, and speaking with awful solemnity, “ if you will step into this room and sit down for a moment ; ” but the other stuck to him like a leech, repeating, as he toddled close to his elbow across the hall,—“ Only five minutes, Robinson, I’ll not intrude for longer.”

Arrived at the parlour where the family were assembled ; the judicious Robinson, pausing, made one more effort, as he laid his finger on the lock,—

“ You ’ll excuse me, sir, but wouldn’t Mrs. Grey do just for the present ? ”

“ No, no, Robinson, no ; I can confer only with principals ! It is a family affair : strictly confidential ; ” whereupon, Robinson, with a sort of spite-

ful recklessness, threw the door back to its fullest extent, and calling out the name of Fothergill, in his loudest and clearest voice, at once electrified the company and admitted the bore.

Even the obtuse Mr. Fothergill, as he cast a nervous glance round upon the family group—even he, relation though he boasted himself, must have felt that he was not wanted amongst them.

The young officer, looking some years older than he really was, and totally altered from the jacketed stripling of Mr. Fothergill's reminiscences, was seated next his mother, deep in talk, with her hand clasped in his ; whilst his father, whose countenance, usually so cold and calm, had assumed an air of tenderness seldom before displayed by him, stood near, with his attention riveted on the being he held dearer than anything else upon earth.

Esther and Mrs. Grey, a little apart, with Mr. Francis and Mr. Pickering—the latter looking an inch taller since the return of his old pupil—questioned the new-comer ; or, in a lower key, exchanged remarks on his altered appearance.

There had been time enough for all that seemed to require explanation in Captain Luttrell's latterly protracted silence and sudden return home ; and yet, though he talked of letters miscarrying, and such like natural contingencies, the matter did not appear very fairly made out : nor were his auditors much enlightened when he alluded to some unexpected intelligence which had quickened his movements ; though it might be gathered from his constrained manner, and the sudden heightening of his complexion,

that this same news had been of a disagreeable nature.

Then, abruptly changing the subject, before they could inquire further,—“Tell me how it is that I find you all here?” he asked; “I thought you would be at Horton: I would rather have found you there.”

“Yet this is equally your home, my love,” said his mother, looking fondly in his face: one could almost have fancied Mrs. Luttrell’s simple words conveyed some sort of reproach, for the young man, looking round the room, repeated,—

“My home!” in such a melancholy voice, so opposite in its tone to all that was animating the others, that it could scarcely have passed unheeded, if, just then, the general attention had not been diverted to the unwelcome approach of Mr. Fothergill.

His first movement, when he had crossed the threshold, was to wheel round and make sure that the door was closed after him, and the servant out of hearing; then, as the astonished family rose to receive him, he began mysteriously to whisper his apologies,—

“For I am aware I am an intruder, and nothing less than a very serious emergency would have driven me to such a step—nothing else, I assure you; considering Captain Luttrell’s recent arrival, not to mention my own dinner hour, which must be nearly on the stroke: but, as I ventured to say to Robinson, it is a family affair; quite a family matter; and therefore, if the captain will excuse——”

“ There is no occasion to apologize, sir ; my mother and I shall have plenty of time to converse ;” and giving her up to Mr. Fothergill, Hartley turned to his father and the other gentlemen ; and as he never dreamed that the domestic troubles of their opposite neighbour could be of the slightest consequence to himself, he had soon forgotten the very presence of the intruder.

It was not so, however, with the rest of the family ; for, lately, the arrangements at No. 47 had, on various accounts, excited such general interest, that no individual of the company could regard the agitated entrance of its respectable proprietor without considerable curiosity and some apprehension : even young Luttrell himself was for the moment superseded, and no longer stood out as the chief figure in the family group.

Nevertheless, between the old gentleman’s anxiety to make a clean breast, and his alarm at being censured as a scandal-monger, it was hard to get at the drift of his visit, or to understand more than that something very extraordinary was happening over the way.

“ All at sixes and sevens, everything topsy-turvy—Miss Fanny drowned in tears, and her ladyship, Lady S., oh ! the excitement in that quarter ! it must end in hysterics. I see what is coming, for I have had painful experience lately—poor Miss D. !—ah ! you are not aware what a scene I was subjected to with that afflicted young lady ; and now I foresee it is all to be gone over again with her ladyship ; and at her time of life—oh ! I assure you,

I have known a fit of apoplexy to ensue from a much slighter cause. Yes, that young person has much to answer for : she has, indeed !”

His audience stared at each other, and plied him with questions ; but then he rambled off into a eulogium on the strength of nerve evinced by the late Mrs. Fothergill, who was never known, during the whole course of their happy union, to have given way to one hysterical attack, or (as her husband expressed it) a female affection of any sort : “a tear, so much as a tear, was, I assure you, an event of rare occurrence with her.”

“I have not a doubt of it !” said Mr. Francis, whose impatience was becoming evident to every one but the person who tried it. “For,” he continued in the ear of Mr. Pickering, “a more selfish, hard-hearted old vixen—”

“Be quiet, my dear sir,” whispered the Reverend Thomas ; “remember Sancho Panza’s story of Ruy Diaz and the goats, and don’t interrupt the old gentleman ; he’ll come to the point in time—he is working round scientifically, and will touch the key-note at last : had he been a musician, his fugues would have been incomparable.”

“Oh, confound his fugues ! Why not tell his story at once, if he has really anything to tell ?”

The explanation, if it deserved the name, came only too soon ; when Mr. Fothergill pursued his confused narrative, with—

“And I grieve to say it, you will all of you regret to hear, that all this confusion in my poor house, and also the catastrophe in Curzon-street—Miss D.’s

catastrophe, with regard, you know, to a certain captain : in short, all the female excitement, so trying to my nerves, is mainly attributable to one individual—one young person—we will not mention names ; but a certain relative of ours, who was so highly recommended to me as an eligible guest and associate for Miss Fanny.”

Here arose a general exclamation of—“ Miss Carew ! are you alluding to Miss Carew, sir ? ” The name struck the ear of both father and son, and each turned a startled and inquiring glance on the eager little group now clustering round Mr. Fothergill.

“ H-u-s-h—h-u-s-h ! ” he whispered, warning them with his finger, and directing an alarmed eye towards the key-hole. “ Robinson may not be out of hearing : servants never are ; and, when ladies’ reputations are at stake, we can’t be too particular—but you may depend upon it, for I had it from an authentic source, that Miss C. is at the bottom of everything : all the jealousies and hysterical affections, and the disarrangements in a certain mansion in May Fair ; which we fear to be final, as connected with the behaviour of a captain, who shall be nameless. Oh, it’s a bad case : very bad, I fear ; and connected as I am with all parties, and desirous of keeping on a friendly footing, I trust my good friends here will not take offence : they will see the propriety of my declining to entertain this young person—for I can’t have her—I can’t, indeed,” and here he wrung his hands.

“ Do you mean to say, sir,” said Mr. Pickering,

very eagerly, "that the young lady has not arrived at your house? that you have seen nothing of her? nor had any excuse to account for the delay?"

Mr. Fothergill shook his head, and his interrogator, looking at Mr. Luttrell, murmured that it had a very suspicious appearance.

Captain Luttrell's pallid complexion had been deepening with every word that was uttered, and he was addressing Mr. Fothergill, when his uncle, who was also growing very red in the face, suddenly confronted the old gentleman, and began, in a stern voice,—

"Have the goodness, Mr. Fothergill, to shake off this affectation of reserve; and, if you *will* repeat scandalous stories, at least discard the flimsy veil of an initial letter. Do you mean to say—recollect, sir, it is the character of a mutual relation you are impugning—do you mean to say that *our* cousin, Miss Carew, is the object of your inuendoes?" he had not time to finish his speech, before Mr. Luttrell, interposing, said, in his own decided manner,—

"Francis, Mr. Fothergill is quite right—I know his statement to be perfectly correct. In consideration for Sophia, and influenced also by the hope that everything might eventually be hushed up, I have kept the matter secret even from my own family; but now that Mr. Fothergill mentions it, I have no scruple in confirming all he says. It is perfectly true that this young woman has been tampering with the affections of Charles Romilly, and that Sophy Drake is the victim of their united baseness. I had it from the lips of the poor girl herself, in the first

instance; and to-day her information is fully confirmed by the young man's own proceeding. Mr. Pickering, whom I requested to inquire for him at his uncle's, brings me word that he has this morning absconded—gone off, nobody knows whither; leaving, as it appears, no message or explanation behind: and I only hope, for the credit of our family, that he is gone alone."

"William, I beseech you, do not suffer your excellent judgment to be so warped."

"Francis, Francis! you who have yourself been made a fool of by this dangerous woman, are the last to influence my opinion of her. I fancy you may thank your good fortune rather than your prudence, that you have escaped from her toils."

His brother, though not without some confusion, denied the charge.

"It was an utter mistake,—a joke, a jest, an absurdity."

But Mr. Luttrell, with a dignified gesture—such as might have become the Lord Mayor himself, silencing the vain protestations of some offender whose face was notorious at the bar—merely replied, "It is a sort of jest, Francis, which, supposing this unprincipled girl had not started other game in the mean while, you might bitterly have rued for the rest of your life;" and with that, beckoning his son to follow him, he left the room.

"There, Mr. Fothergill! see the mischief you have done," cried Mr. Francis, walking up and down the room in high dudgeon: "another time, sir, it will be as well to think twice before you enter a house for

the purpose of breeding family dissension, setting the nearest relations together by the ears, and — and — making a jackass of yourself into the bargain!”

While Mrs. Luttrell interposed with gentle soothing, and Mr. Fothergill alternately defended his conduct, and resented the word “jackass,” Hartley Luttrell, drawing Mrs. Grey aside, adjured her, in the name of Heaven, to let him know the meaning of all this, and how it happened that his uncle was mixed up in the affairs of this—he could not bring himself to pronounce her name—“this lady.”

The whole party had been too thoroughly engrossed to notice any peculiarity in Captain Luttrell’s manner: the excited look and varying expression with which he had followed each speaker, who seemed able to throw additional light on a subject to him of the most fearful concernment; his quick intelligence, sharpened by his fears and by that letter of Romilly’s—which had, unfortunately, *not* miscarried, and which had induced his sudden return to England. His mind, thus predisposed for suspicion, seized and applied but too easily every insinuation against his unhappy wife: he had shuddered from head to foot as his father—whose cool judgment, and freedom from the littlenesses of a gossiping disposition, he knew and honoured—had stood forth to brand with infamy this abandoned seducer of another woman’s affianced lover; little dreaming, as he did so, of that previous event in the life of Carew’s daughter, which must have increased her guilt a hundredfold. But then, the implicating Mr.

Francis, as another of her victims!—it was an idea so monstrous and unaccountable, as to throw a species of incredibility over the whole story. Mrs Grey, though she would have preferred listening to what was going forward with the old mischief-maker of No. 47, answered him with easy good humour.

“My dear Captain Luttrell, take my advice, and don’t trouble your head about it one way or the other; between ourselves, it’s a silly sort of business: but such things will occur in the most sensible families sometimes: all you and I have to do, is to keep friends with all parties, and be thankful we are out of the scrape.”

“Yes, yes, I understand what you would say,” he answered her, impatiently: “I am not now to learn that men can be fools and women false: but my uncle’s name being brought forward! that *must* be a mistake—an utter absurdity! it’s obvious! it can’t be!”

The old lady gave one of her little provoking chuckles.

“La, captain!” said she, “who can presume to answer for the weaknesses of gentlemen of Mr. Francis’s time of life?”

“Oh, nonsense, ma’am! the idea is ridiculous; and if this lady is the object of such an evident slander, it is impossible to credit a single charge that is brought against her.”

“Pray, Captain Luttrell, are you or I likely to know best what has been passing in your father’s house during the last six months?”

It was thus Mrs. Grey attempted quietly to put

down what struck her as an interference equally rude and unnecessary. He made her no answer, however; for even while she spoke, he had sunk into some deep train of thought, and comprehended not a word she addressed to him. But upon this, his cousin Esther, who had caught something of what was passing between them, came up to the support of her friend.

"Hartley," said she, "strange as it may seem to you to hear me say so, I would much rather you had stayed away a little longer; for you will not find us the happy united family we once were."

"Explain yourself," said he abruptly.

"Oh! the thing is easily accounted for: a demon has settled amongst us, stirring up our worst passions, and rendering us captious and quarrelsome—that worst of fiends, a woman with a beautiful face and corrupt heart." But Luttrell, whose brow darkened more and more as she spoke, interrupted her:—

"Be careful what you say, Esther! Remember, you will have to prove every word you utter against this unhappy girl: no shadow of doubt must rest upon the matter; so look to it well, and take care that none of the malicious passions you censure in others are actuating your own heart." And without waiting for her reply, or regarding the angry and astonished look she levelled at him, he turned his back on both the ladies.

"Well," said Esther, "if these are the manners our officers are to bring back with them, Heaven help us! for we might as well live in a bear-garden."

“A little disordered in the liver, my dear,” said the old lady, slightly patting that part of her person where she presumed her own to lie; “temper and digestion equally disarranged, I fancy: but he’s very much altered altogether.”

The subject of their remarks was equally deaf and indifferent to them; his mother was now speaking, and in her words there shone upon him the only gleam of hope he had yet enjoyed: it was plain she did not partake of the harsh feelings of the others, and his heart blessed her, as he heard her say in a gentle, yet somewhat mortified tone,—

“Surely, Mr. Fothergill, you do not imagine that if I thought ill of Miss Carew, I should have advised you to receive her into your house? I know she is an object of prejudice, and even dislike, to some of my family; but I have been very intimate with her, and I can conscientiously declare, that I have never observed anything in her conduct but what was correct and proper in the highest degree: she must be, indeed, an arch-deceiver, if she is capable of anything like premeditated treachery.” Then looking in the face of her son, as in his sudden joy he half embraced her, she continued, “your cousin, Selby, is one of the sweetest creatures you can imagine, Hartley; and you don’t know what comfort I have found in her charming companionship, when others have thought too little of my feelings, or have been too much engrossed with their own pursuits to give up their time to me; and ——” Mrs. Luttrell went on, warming with her subject and her generous defence of her friend—“as

to her having so lost herself as to be the companion of that wild young man, I don't believe a syllable of it: your uncle Francis, I know, will agree with me; for *he* always did her justice."

Mrs. Luttrell's confident appeal to her brother-in-law had not all the success she expected; the fact being, that that gentleman's sentiments were undergoing a very uncomfortable change, when he heard his beautiful cousin accused of stealing the heart of young Romilly. And even at the moment when he stood forward as her champion to rebut the charge, that interview he had had with her in Maddox-street came flashing across his remembrance: he bethought him of her embarrassment, her shyness, her shame, and contrition. Ulysses! ha! had he not traced *her* guilty confusion to something of a military source? and could he, acting with the same consummate tact he had displayed in Mrs. Dawes's little drawing-room—could he entertain one sober doubt as to whom the officer might be who had induced that blushing trepidation, and caused those tears to flow? In the frailty of woman's nature, she had gone astray; yet was there still enough of the angel left within her to raise a certain compunction for the mischief she was doing.

Obstinate, therefore, as Mr. Francis was inclined to be in defence of the fair Carew, the evidence against her seemed even to him little else than conclusive. In moody silence, he leaned over a high-backed chair, and was only roused to speech by the rash address of his sister-in-law. If a wasp had

stung him, he could not have started away more peevishly.

“Oh ! don’t appeal to me, Isabella !” he replied ; “I know nothing about the matter. You women are strange beings, all of you—from first to last inexplicable to me : I don’t profess to understand any of you, and should be loth to pledge myself for any individual of your provoking sex.”

Saying which, Mr. Francis turned and stalked out of the room ; closing the door after him with something more like a positive *slam* than anything he had ever been known to execute until that excited moment. The ladies from the Lodge looked at each other with evident satisfaction, while Luttrell’s countenance fell ; for he thought to himself, “Even my uncle can say nothing in her favour :” and he was on the point of following him, when Robinson, entering in haste, put into his hands a note of the smallest dimensions, and informed him that the bearer said his presence was required immediately in Maddox-street ; where Mr. Hamilton was now lying, at the point of death, and earnestly desiring to see Captain Luttrell.

Hartley drew his hand across his forehead, and muttered the name of Hamilton ; as if, under the pressure of some great anxiety, he found it difficult to direct his thoughts to this new subject. Robinson repeated his message, and this time loud enough for the rest to hear him ; whereupon Mrs. Luttrell, starting up, said, with unusual haughtiness,—“Tell the man that Captain Luttrell is but just arrived, and that when he has rested himself, and taken some refreshment, he will call at Mr. Hamilton’s. No-

body"—and she turned to Hartley—"can expect you to leave your home the moment almost after you have entered it!"

"Oh! dear, no!" said the other ladies; "that can't be expected of any one."

But Luttrell, calling after the servant, bade him detain the messenger, that he might accompany him back; and, as he opened the note that had been delivered to him, he explained to his mother that his poor friend, Hamilton, was in a dying state, and wished to see him: for he supposed she had not heard distinctly the purport of the message.

"I knew he was very bad, poor fellow!" he continued; "but I did not think it had come to this with him."

"Oh! it's the same story we have been hearing every hour," said Esther, pettishly: "he's ill enough, no doubt, poor man! but he can't have been at the point of death ever since he came to town."

And the ladies grumbled *sotto voce*, and Mrs. Luttrell bit her lip, and looked daggers at the little note, and at her son while he was reading it.

And now, in the same way that we have desired to hide the ill-behaviour of some other respected characters in our story, we would gladly here draw a veil over that of Mrs. Luttrell; for if ever, in this world of sin, sorrow, shame, and bad manners, a well-bred gentlewoman forgot herself completely, she was that person: incited by the pitying murmur that fell from the lips of her son as he read Mrs. Hamilton's tone—the gently uttered "Poor thing! poor Alicia!"—she made no more ado, but pounced at once upon

the billet, and, without a syllable of excuse, glanced her eye also over its contents :—" Come instantly, if you love us, or it will be too late !" It had, apparently, been written in the greatest haste ; for there was neither address nor signature : doubtless the hand was too well known to require the usual formalities of letter-writing. And so, giving way to the feelings she had so long nursed and fretted over, Mrs. Luttrell tore the scroll to pieces, and, scattering them on the floor, exclaimed,—“ If you go to that woman, Hartley, I'll never forgive you !”

The company present, though most of them knew well the cause of her vehemence, were confounded at this violent manifestation of it ; whilst her son, at the same moment enlightened and incensed, grew crimson, as he proudly demanded the meaning of her words.

“ Would she prevent his obeying the summons of his dying friend ?—the best, the kindest of human creatures. Of what could she be thinking ?”

“ Ah !” she replied, quickly, “ if I really believed the message ! But I don't : not a word, not a syllable of it ! Don't interrupt me, Esther ; I have been silent perhaps too long, and now nothing shall prevent my speaking. No, I do *not* believe Mr. Hamilton is dying : I don't believe he is worse than he has been for months ; but she makes him the pretext to entice you to her. It is a deception, a snare ; and one that you, infatuated that you are ! will easily fall into.” Then throwing herself on the sofa and bursting into tears, she exclaimed, “ Oh, Hartley ! if this is to be the end of all my

anxious love, why—why did you ever come back to me?”

“Perhaps it might have been better if I never had,” he answered, gloomily: “but now that I am here, consider, madam, what your words imply; and whatever your suspicions may be, spare me the pain, and yourself the impropriety, of publishing them, even in your own family. Remember, you are casting a most unwarrantable imputation upon a lady, whose character, till you assailed it, has never been called in question; whose manners are irreproachable.”

Mrs. Grey at this point could not help indulging in a slight cough; when Esther began, “Oh, as for that, Hartley——”

But his mother, raising herself from her recumbent position, said firmly, “It is false! I have watched that woman well, and know her perfectly: she is bold and unprincipled; her sentiments such as no virtuous mind could give utterance to. I am conscious,” her voice again faltered,—“quite conscious that I am speaking to little purpose; but speak I must. I foresee you will fall a victim to her arts, and be lost to me for ever: for never can I be happy, Hartley, if you give that woman the right to call me mother.”

Luttrell listened to her with a fixed eye and a gloomy determination, that had something almost fearful in it; he then replied, “The strange mistake into which you have fallen, in supposing Mrs. Hamilton the object of any improper attention from me, is your only excuse for calumniating her. A time is coming, when you, madam, and all who speak ill of one of the most devoted wives, and most generous of women,

will be heartily sorry for what you have said: yes, I repeat it," he spoke with increasing solemnity, "a time is fast approaching when you would rejoice to find me free to do what you are now deprecating—when you would give the world to see me indeed the husband of Alicia Hamilton!" With that he was leaving the room; when, softened by the agony of his mother, he turned once more, and approaching the sofa, where she lay with her face buried in its cushions, leaned down and attempted to soothe her: but still it was with a gravity more calculated to frighten than console. "Whatever mortification you may have to bear on my account, be satisfied that on this head, at least, your fears are groundless. I pledge you my sacred word, mother, that I am going to visit the husband, and not the wife. You, who used to be so tender of heart, so gentle, so right minded! *you* would not have me refuse my dying friend his last request?"

"It is no such thing, Hartley!" she sobbed out: "it's only a story of hers, invented to decoy you."

He turned from her with a gesture of impatience, and hastened to the door; yet still, for a second or two, hesitated as he opened it: with a single sentence, he knew he could dispel the source of Mrs. Luttrell's present disquietude; and he asked himself would it not be wise to do so, even at the risk of another painful scene, and fresh excitement? But he had deferred acknowledging Carew's daughter as his wife, when he believed her to be spotless as an angel, with a reputation free from the remotest blemish; and he could not bring

himself to confess the connection, when the doubtful circumstances in which she was now placed rendered that connection so doubly disgraceful. It might be simply his resolution that failed him; but he persuaded himself to wait a further and more formal inquisition into her late proceedings, and take time to nerve himself for the disclosure—before he made it publicly known that this woman, so reviled by his family, and especially by his father, the object of almost universal mistrust and contempt, was his lawfully wedded wife. The sight of the Hamiltons' messenger waiting him in the hall, reminded Luttrell that he must not loiter: he walked with his utmost speed to the first coach-stand, and from thence was quickly transported to Maddox-street.

But before we follow him thither, it will be as well to notice what happened to Tom Hodges, the envoy in question; to whom, as he sat waiting for Captain Luttrell, alternately yawning and exchanging a few words with the porter, an incident had occurred which had aroused his curiosity considerably. He had seen a hired coach drive up to the Luttrells' door, laden with a certain hair-trunk, and boxes of a shape familiar to him; for at a glance he could have sworn to them, as being the individual packages over which he had stumbled more than once in the front passage of Mrs. Dawes's lodging-house, and which were known to all the dwellers in that respectable establishment as the personal property of Mrs. Carew.

Outside, were the trunks; inside, was the lady. From one of the narrow cross-barred windows by the side of the hall-door, Mr. Hodges carried on his

observations ; wondering as he did so, what business Mrs. Carew could have in this locality. He watched her beckon the porter to the coach-door, and at the conclusion of a short, but, as it seemed to Tom, an impressive conference, deliver him a letter, and put something into his hand of sufficient value to induce a respectful bow in return. Hodges was convinced that it could not have amounted to less than five shillings, and it might have been more ; and then Mrs. Carew threw up her veil for a moment, her face being rather flushed, cast her fine eyes hastily over the house, drew up the coach window, and in another second the vehicle was in motion, and the hall-door closed.

The fat porter, who had pocketed his guerdon so discreetly that Tom could but guess at the number of half-crowns composing it, handed the letter to a footman who now came forward ; adding an injunction that it was to be given into “master’s” own hands directly ; Captain Luttrell also entering the hall at that moment, Hodges felt certain (a Carew being implicated in the transaction) that the word “master” must needs refer to him ; and when he saw the man who had received the letter, pass up stairs without delivering it to Hartley, he was half inclined to call him back. Yet, not unnatural as was the deduction drawn by the ready wit of the captain’s old serving man ; misled by the reminiscences of Quin’s Folly, he mistook the matter altogether—that letter was intended for Mr. Luttrell, and *not* for his son.

CHAPTER XI.

WHATEVER degree of truth or likelihood there might be in Mrs. Luttrell's severe imputations on the character of Mrs. Hamilton ; that particular charge was, at least, unfounded, which accused her of falsifying the condition of her husband. There could be no doubt that his decline had been considerably accelerated by the journey she had persuaded him to take ; and while the stormy scene we have just described proceeded amongst the Luttrells, Mr. Hamilton was momentarily sinking.

A solemn silence brooded over the once lively little household in Maddox-street ; and even those who were farthest from the sick-chamber moved upon tip-toe and spoke under their breath. The most silent and solitary of all, sat Selby ; watching in her chamber—watching, listening—she hardly knew for what. The future was such a blank to her ! so wholly dependent was she on the will of one human being : his constancy or caprice, his virtue or his wickedness. How, when all was so vague, could she even speculate on what was to be ? She could only feel that something overwhelming was surely at hand ; and, covering her eyes, while her hearing grew unna-

turally acute, she sat there; outwardly, the very picture of calm endurance, while a strange tumult was working within her.

A quiet step upon the threshold roused her from this apparent stupor; she looked up, and seeing her little landlady with her apron at her eyes, concluded she came to announce the death of poor Hamilton. But it was not come to this: Mrs. Dawes only came to describe how fast he was sinking, and to say that Mr. Mauleverer was just going to read prayers to him. All the household was assembled in the sick chamber, and she thought that Miss Carew, who had known her dear old master, and had taken so kind an interest in him—perhaps she would like to join the family on this solemn occasion. Selby hesitated, for she dreaded the sight of the dying man, and loathed that of his wife; but then a better feeling came over her, and, raising her eyes, now streaming with tears, she murmured,—

“I will go down, whatever it costs me. God knows! it may be I have more need of prayer than that good man!” And meekly following her hostess’s creeping footsteps, she descended to the chamber of death.

The heat of a summer evening had caused the door to be left wide open, so that they entered almost unobserved; for the attendants were kneeling round the bed, at the head of which Mr. Mauleverer was reading in a low but distinct voice. Selby moved to the furthest corner of the room, fearing that, in the agony of her soul, those touching words might extort some involuntary expression of her

grief—some cry at variance with that scene of resigned suffering and heavenly hope. Yet the sight of Mr. Hamilton, much as she had feared it, served to soothe rather than shock her. Since she had known him, he had always been so pale and attenuated, and his fine countenance had worn so invariably the same expression of placid endurance that sat upon it now, that she could hardly believe him to be really dying.

As Mauleverer paused for a moment in his reading, the invalid made a slight movement: his head rested uneasily. In an instant Alicia was attending to him; varying the disposition of his pillows, bending over him like the consoling spirit whose pure personification he almost believed her to be. From her obscure position, Selby saw them both: her old feelings of mingled repugnance and fascination impelling her to observe every action of Mrs. Hamilton's. "How symmetrical was her figure! how graceful and easy were all her movements! Just so must she have appeared to *him* when she tended him in his sickness! just so had she looked and moved!"

She checked herself, and prayed for purer thoughts and a more candid spirit. How dared she, while in the attitude of supplication herself, impute baseness to one who was so well fulfilling her present duties, that it seemed sinful to suspect her? She wondered, indeed, that Mrs. Hamilton could preserve her firmness so unbroken, and be able to check every feminine emotion; but, doubtless, it was the high privilege of some to be so strengthened by nature or reflection, that they could look upon the sufferings of

their dearest friends with dry eyes and lips that quivered not.

Even while she thus took herself to task, and struggled for a more charitable frame of mind, Selby observed Mrs. Hamilton glide from her husband's side to the nearest window, draw aside the blind, and look out intently. The windows being open, in the stillness of the chamber every external sound might be heard ; and both ladies were aware that a coach, driving rapidly up, had stopped at Mrs. Dawes's door. One rapid glance sufficed Alicia. "He's come !" she whispered, exultingly : for her vehement nature disdained to conceal the joy that filled her heart ; and, as she rushed from the room, Selby could see how her colour was raised, and her eyes were sparkling.

The looks of the sick man followed her with a sudden animation that brightened every fading feature : his understanding was still perfect ; and, in his confiding nature, he shared unsuspectingly the satisfaction of his Alicia, and wistfully strained his failing sight for the entrance of his much-loved friend.

Mauleverer closed his prayer-book ; and, moving from the bedside, stood, with a wrinkled brow, observing narrowly what was passing — observing, amongst other things, the behaviour of Miss Carew, who shrank into a corner of the large easy chair at which she had been kneeling ; kept every portion of her pale face concealed with her handkerchief : except her eyes, which were fixed with a strange intensity on the open doorway. Her outward aspect may be painted ; but who can tell what was passing within

during those brief moments, when she knew that her husband and her rival were meeting and communing together?

The murmur of their voices scarcely reached her; but there came a low sob from the passage, which shewed that the tears which Mr. Hamilton's dying pangs had failed to extort from his lady, flowed readily at the sight of their mutual friend. And then they entered together—her hand clasping or clasped in his, her beautiful face turned towards him: and in this manner came to pass that meeting with her husband which Selby had so long anticipated.

Hundreds, thousands of times since Luttrell's departure, had she pictured the moment that was to restore him to her sight; and now he was before her: and yet, so greatly was he altered—not only by the vicissitudes of his military life, but by the mental anxiety he had lately undergone—that it was not till she heard him speak that she could quite believe in his identity. Then, that voice, so dearly loved, so often recalled, in all its varied tones of gravity, or mirth, or tenderness—that voice was still the same: sending, with its sense of reality, a thrill to her very heart. She drank in every word he uttered: and blest was the change that came over her; soothing her jealous feelings, and reanimating her almost expiring hopes. For was it to be believed that he could speak so sweetly to his dying friend, and yet be disloyal to him—or to her? Could he utter those words of comfort, and listen to the faint tones of poor Mr. Hamilton, if he were conscious that he had

sinned against him, even in thought? The discerning and rigid Mauleverer seemed to adopt this softened view of the case; for his features relaxed from their stern expression, and presently he turned and leaned against the mantelpiece, as if to hide some natural emotion.

In a voice which, though very feeble, was still articulate, Mr. Hamilton expressed the delight he felt in seeing Luttrell once more, and the mysterious conviction which had rested on him throughout his illness, that so it would be; and that the soul, which was fluttering on the brink of existence, would not take its flight till it had been again suffered to hold earthly communion with its dearest friend: and then the dying man, conscious of his fast decreasing strength, spoke to Hartley of his—of *their* beloved Alicia.

“To you, I commit the treasure of my life!” such were the words, growing more feeble, and interrupted every moment, that caught the earnest attention of Selby and Mauleverer: “You, who know her excellence—who alone are worthy of her.” Here his breath failed him; and when he spoke again his mind was wandering, and visions of the world to which he was hastening, mingled with the realities around him. Not a breath was heard in the chamber, as, with a smile of rapture, the dying man looked upward, and murmured of the bright forms that were hovering over his bed—angels from heaven blessing the two so dear to him.

Mrs. Hamilton, who seemed by this time thoroughly subdued, was crouching by the bedside; her face averted,

and her hand in the cold grasp of her husband. It was then that he—doubtless fancying, in the confusion of his failing intellect, that he was obeying the signal of some celestial monitor—exerted the little strength remaining to him to join the hands of Hartley and Alicia. The effort was beyond his powers; but the intention was so evident, that Selby, lost to everything but the horror of the moment, darted forward to prevent the sacrilegious conjunction.

The eyes of the astonished Luttrell met those of his wife; and in their ghastly, terrified expression, he might surely be pardoned for believing that, to the ærial forms visible only to poor Hamilton, there was added another beautiful but avenging spirit. The moment of recognition, though perfect, was short.

A scream from Mrs. Hamilton, as she started to her feet, told Hartley that he was supporting the corpse of her husband: in the slight exertion the dying man had striven to make, existence had passed away. From what cause soever it might arise—whether from the memory of affection long worn out, or womanly pity, or the pangs of a wholesome remorse—the agony that overwhelmed the new-made widow was certainly as genuine as it was fearful to behold. She mingled her shrieks with words of wild affright; and, throwing her arms round Luttrell, implored him not to leave her utterly bereaved. “To whom could she look? whom had she left to care for her but him?”

The object of her intemperate endearments, resigning the remains of his friend to the weeping attendants, and casting a very equivocal glance at the opposite side of the bed, attempted to

pacify the lady; soothing her with a kindness of manner, which, though it was really only natural to the occasion, pierced the jealous heart of poor Selby to the very core. He entreated her to be "calm," "composed," to be, in short, "*herself*;" whilst her brother, with less ceremony and much more decision, admonished her to cease from these transports of grief, which were neither decent in themselves, nor respectful to the deceased. But Mauleverer's interference only added fuel to the unholy fire that was raging within her; she rudely repulsed him when he would have drawn her away, and still clinging to Luttrell, called out wildly, "Save me! save me, Hartley!"

Mrs. Dawes and her myrmidons, with scared looks, stood aloof; but that which made them quail, made Selby bold: she trembled, indeed, but it was not with fear; and advancing into the group, with a firm and undaunted bearing, she pointed imperatively to the door, and said, "Quit the room, Captain Luttrell, and leave this wretched woman to her conscience! Your mission was accomplished when you closed the eyes of her husband."

Selby's sudden apparition and uncompromising address had a striking effect on Mrs. Hamilton: it tamed her completely, for the moment; and, with only a bewildered look of appeal towards Luttrell, she suffered her brother to take possession of her. But the impression was but transitory, for just as Luttrell was following his wife, who had passed before him into the entrance-passage, Alicia burst from Mauleverer, and, rushing back to Hartley, fell

fainting in his arms. He, perceiving her helpless state, could he refuse to receive her? for, accustomed to regard Mrs. Hamilton with respectful admiration and tender esteem, her violence lost in his eyes all that made it revolting in those of his wife. To him it was only excess of grief for the excellent being lying cold and insensible before her; or it was fear of that harsh brother who checked her natural emotion so sternly; or it was reliance on *him*, her own and her husband's friend. And so Captain Luttrell could do no less than save Alicia from sinking on the floor; and when Selby turned to look for him—hoping, trusting he was by her side—she saw her husband on the spot where she had left him, with Mrs. Hamilton in his arms!

Another look would have done much to tranquillize her—the patience of a very few seconds; but no, this was not to be: she uttered one low cry, as full of anguish as any of Alicia's passionate wailings, and flew from what seemed to her the scene of her own ruin and his disgrace. When Luttrell followed her, which he did as soon as he had disengaged himself from his lovely burthen, he found the room where he presumed his wife to be, effectually fastened; and to his application for instant admittance an utter silence was opposed. He represented, persuaded, remonstrated; at first gently, then in a more peremptory tone; but all to no purpose: not a word was vouchsafed him in return. To force the door by any effort of his own was impossible; and his sense of propriety, no less than the apprehension of becoming a laughing-stock to all to whom he should

confide his peculiar perplexities, prevented any idea of summoning the people of the house, or requiring professional assistance from picklocks or crowbars.

Still he lingered and hearkened at the door : nay, I believe, Captain Luttrell condescended even to the keyhole ; till his impatience, and a certain sense of the degrading and absurd, drove him half-wild. Independently of his wish, not merely to appease Selby, but also to satisfy himself, if possible, as to certain important statements reflecting on her own character—apart from these paramount considerations—the hero of many skirmishes, some pitched battles, and a siege or two, relished not the being foiled by his wife.

In extenuation of our heroine's seeming implacability, we must explain that she really did not hear so much as the sound of her husband's voice. In the first excess of her jealous rage, she was certainly guilty of having drawn the bolt against him ; but then she had betaken herself to her inner chamber, and closing that door also, it was only by some demonstration of brute force, such as in that house of mourning he could not dream of displaying, that Luttrell could have been able to excite her attention.

Hours, therefore, elapsed ; while she, ignorant of his having even followed her up-stairs, remained aloof, sinking from the vehemence of grief into sullen despair ; and, forgetting the material obstacle she had with her own hands interposed between them, she regarded her case as one of absolute desertion, and believed they were separated for ever.

It was not till a late hour, when Mrs. Dawes was

retiring for the night, that she succeeded in attracting her lodger's attention, and delivering her a note ; which Captain Luttrell, before he left the house, had scribbled off in such a state of excitement as rendered it somewhat difficult to be read. Thus ran the scroll :—

“ MY DEAR SELBY,—I shall return early to-morrow, when I shall expect to know the reason of your extraordinary behaviour ; and also to receive (as I trust I shall) a full explanation of some particulars of your own conduct, which have laid you open to remark, and shocked me beyond expression.

“ Your husband,

“ H. L.”

Though this missive shewed that Captain Luttrell had no intention of deserting his unhappy wife, its tenor was too stern to afford her comfort. Tormented as Selby was, and long had been, with the fear that Mrs. Hamilton had superseded her in his affection, the recriminating style in which he wrote only offended her the more ; for it seemed, to her jaundiced perception, that he, feeling conscious how much he had wronged her, was basely endeavouring to cast the same species of odium on her. Loving him so dearly as she did, one kind word in the midst of all his reproaches would have served to dispel half her unjust suspicions ; but he was much too angry for any such condescension : and thus the breach was widened, and Selby closed her aching eyes without a hope that sleep would visit them that night.

CHAPTER XII.

ON leaving Maddox-street, Captain Luttrell seemed to be making straight for his father's house; but it was little more than a blind impulse that led him towards the home of his childhood: for, though the desperate pace at which he had emerged from Mrs. Dawes's, slackened somewhat as he went along, thereby giving reason to suppose that the heat which had been lately engendered—"the fire in his heart, and the fire in his brain"—was partially cooling, yet he passed the end of Great George-street without so much as turning his head in that direction. He felt that he could not immediately bear the affectionate scrutiny of the eyes he must encounter there; still less the smiles of gladness that awaited him. Some solitary thinking would be requisite, to smooth his brow with at least a decent composure: a something, however faint it might be, which should accord with the general cheerfulness diffused over the family circle by his welcome presence.

So on he hurried through the well-known purlieus of old Westminster, passing the Abbey, where his romantic boyhood had loved to linger; now walking heedlessly on with hardly a glance of recognition—

that dear, old cathedral, which had been to his proud, shy nature as a valued friend, whose shadow had never fallen upon him but he felt the better for the mute greeting : if happy, his joy grew to a something unearthly ; or, if he chanced to enter there a prey to any childish sorrow, he found a sure consolation in the sweet silence and tender solemnity of its venerable aisles. Many a childish emotion, unsuspected by any living friend of the young heir of Horton, had been confided to these abbey walls ; there was not an ugly monument in Poet's Corner (where all *are* frights), that did not take a kindly interest in his concerns—"rare Ben Jonson" greeting him on the very threshold, and Shakespere, not far off, and full-length Garrick, and many another dear, old soul. No disappointment awaited him from friends like these : no flat contradiction, nor unpalatable advice, under the name of kindly counsel ; nor any awkward attempt at tenderness, subsiding into a domineering lecture. He had it all his own way in these delicious precincts, and he loved them accordingly.

It is only the ancient inhabitants of Westminster who can remember the Millbank of those days—a broad path by the river's side, expanding, by degrees, into a pleasant rural walk ; where the more decent part of the population loved to take a quiet stroll on a summer's evening. Here it was that Luttrell bent his steps, and, moving to and fro under the influence of fresher air and perfect tranquillity of scene, gradually sobered down, and could distinguish amongst the chaos of his excitement, what objects stood out in boldest relief to threaten and alarm him.

In the first instance, no doubt, it was the indignity he had just experienced—the being excluded so cavalierly from the presence of his wife: this it was that galled him most. Just as—to take an instance from physical suffering—a resolute man may lie, without wincing, under the anguish of a serious, perhaps mortal, wound, yet start and grow peevish should the sting of a gnat be added to his other discomforts: he looks on the bullet that has just been extracted from his tortured flesh, as the awful messenger of Fate; or, if he be a religious man, as the minister of a more discerning and parental power than that blind thing which takes the name of Destiny; the contemptible insect is only a further trial of his patience, but he sees it not in that light: it is merely to him a nasty, little, troublesome fly; and if he happens to be a bad man, he breaks out into horrible blasphemies; or, if but an indifferent Christian, still mutters an oath or two: nay, on such an occasion, I firmly believe, the most wisely virtuous, and discreetest of the best—low church, or puseyite, or what you will—would lose his temper and cry, “Deuce take that thing! Will nobody come and kill it for me? Will they let me lie here, mangled and helpless, to be eaten up in my last moments by that beast of a mosquito! Oh, confound the monster, here he comes again. Ah, doctor, doctor! Nurse, where are you?” And here, behold, oh, reader, how, the better to excuse the transgression of my good sufferer—my pattern invalid, I dexterously turn his gnat into a mosquito: for surely, as the most venomous and spiteful of stings

(speaking metaphorically), did Captain Luttrell look on that impertinent conduct of his wife's.

And yet, angry as he was with Selby, I doubt if she could really have conducted herself in any way more likely to reanimate his affection, and restore her weakened influence over her husband. A more amiable reception would have pleased him better at the time; but then he would have had the opportunity of entering immediately into those parts of her conduct, with regard to which poor Selby—being unprepared for defence, because ignorant as to the grounds of her accusation—might possibly have found it difficult to justify herself: then *she* must have been hurt, and *he* offended, and Heaven knows how the quarrel might have ended!

But now, primed as he was for interference, to find himself arraigned of domestic high treason, instead of sitting magisterially, judge and jury all in one, and having his fair young wife explaining this, and re-explaining that, excusing, caressing, weeping, perhaps (for, under this aspect of things, it would scarcely have been in the nature of man to have avoided displaying a little tyranny)—yes, this very excess of rudeness, on the part of his lady, demonstrated her innocence more thoroughly in Luttrell's sight, than if she had welcomed him with the humblest show of conjugal affection. "Had she been guilty of anything really improper during his absence, she never could have met him with such an air of offended virtue."

Heaven knew what they had got into their heads about Mrs. Hamilton and himself! or how or where

the slander had originated. But even his discreet and gentle mother had condescended to play the first act of that farce ; and, probably, it was from her that Selby had caught up the suspicion : but, false and abominable as it was, insulting to him and injurious to poor Alicia, she would not have dared to give expression to the feeling, unless her own conscience had been unburthened.

Of any heinous error, therefore, he trusted to acquit her : but she was young and attractive—most attractive. On this idea he paused a good deal, and often recurred to it : either his memory had been at fault, or she had wonderfully improved within the last few years ; for, lovely as he had always thought her, he now perceived that he had scarcely done her justice. With these striking claims to public notice and private attention, she might not be aware how much greater circumspection was demanded of her than of the ordinary race of women ; especially, considering the peculiar circumstances under which she moved in society.

And here we trust it occurred to Hartley Luttrell that, if he had not placed his young and lovely wife in the anomalous position she had occupied during his absence, the greatest evil of her condition would have been avoided ; for what were those circumstances to which he alluded, but her appearing in the world under a false title, as a free and disengaged woman, while she was secretly a married one ? He was a just man, and in his estimation of the conduct of others, capable of an impartial discernment ; therefore, it is to be hoped he laid this matter seriously to heart,

and derived a moral as well as a physical benefit from pacing the river's side in the tranquillity and soft radiance of a summer sunset.

But to return to the questionable moral we were enforcing above, and without pursuing Captain Luttrell's reflections any farther, it will be plainly seen how much his wife had raised herself in his esteem; not only by the merit, purely passive, of being still a very pretty woman, but also because she had treated him with undeserved acrimony, and had shewn that she could be jealous, stubborn, and unrelenting. It may even be doubted whether the softening influence of so many charms, joined to such an overplus of conjugal impertinence, might not have induced him to return to Maddox-street, and make another effort to bring Selby to reason; if the gallant officer had not reckoned on encountering there his mother-in-law, as well as his wife: for though he might so far humble himself after the insult just offered him, as to seek Selby again within the hour, yet if that bravado had been dictated by her mother—if, in fact, it was cousin John's wife, and not his own, who had closed the door against him, and been deaf to his remonstrances! At this suggestion the affront shone out in all its heinousness; his heart again hardened, and he refused to compromise the dignity of man, and all the glorious attributes of lord and master. If Selby could be so easily acted upon by an influence adverse to his own, she deserved to wait his good pleasure for a reconciliation.

And after all, argued wounded pride—the image of his mama-in-law looming largely in the distance—

he must not forget that Selby stood in a strange light in his father's house. It might be all referred to family prejudice; for Mrs. Luttrell, the most correct of women and of wives, professed herself no believer of the calumny: but it pierced his very heart, to think that his once spotless Selby should have afforded even the faintest occasion of scandal; and before receiving her again to his bosom, he trusted he should have traced every evil report to its false and malignant source. So he turned his face towards Great George-street, and sighing many times, in the vain attempt to bring to that face of his the cheerful expression which every one would expect it to wear (for as to his mother's waywardness, he would soon reason or laugh her out of that), Captain Luttrell knocked at his father's door.

The butler, who seemed to be on the watch for him, came forward as he entered, and not only marshalled him the way to his own room, and offered himself as valet for the nonce, but seemed so anxious to be attentive, that, although his services in that respect had been declined, Luttrell found him still loitering at the head of the stairs, when he made his egress to join the household. Hartley, to whom his face was not familiar, for he had been little more than two years with the Luttrells, said to himself, "Why does the fellow haunt my footsteps? here, in my *home*, as they call it! Does he suppose I have forgotten my way about the house, and require a living finger-post to direct me?" So he set the man down for a fool or a coxcomb, and tried to get rid of him by saying, carelessly, "Ah! you needn't wait: I know

my way to the drawing-room well enough ; I shall find the family there, I suppose ?”

“ No, Captain Luttrell,” said Robinson, demurely, “ not at present ;” and Hartley, pushing open the door as he spoke, felt a sort of disappointment at seeing the room where they had always been used to pass their evenings, now perfectly empty.

“ Where are they, then ?” said he, as he proceeded down-stairs, after peeping into another sitting-room, which looked as desolate as the first ; “ where shall I find some of them ? where’s my father ?”

Robinson—who though he might be a little of a puppy in his way, was so far removed from a simpleton, that he generally succeeded in understanding rather more of family matters than the family themselves considered necessary—left his young master’s question unanswered, while he respectfully inquired if the captain was not “ ready for some refreshment, after his journey : he would give directions immediately.”

“ No,” the other said ; “ there was no occasion : he had had something on his road. They have dined, of course ?” he added, well remembering the old dinner hour, and presuming it had not been altered of late.

“ Not exactly, sir,” said Robinson.

At these words, Hartley’s conscience began to trouble him, and he hastily inquired, “ If they had really been waiting all this time for him ?”

“ I rather think not, Captain Luttrell,” said Robinson, with increased demureness ; “ but to-day the family declined dining at all.”

And certainly as Luttrell turned into the dining-room, he thought that nothing could look more like an uninhabited region ; the chairs standing stiffly along the walls, and the shadows of evening falling over the wide expanse of cold mahogany, where candle-light and comfort should have been reigning. “ A cold reception, surely, after years of absence ! the house as dull and silent as the grave, and no living soul to welcome him but this powdered fop of a footman. Well ! people shewed their sense of joy in a variety of ways ; he had long observed that : but the idea of his friends combining to celebrate his happy return to them by giving up their dinner, and keeping their rooms, had really something so original in it, that he could hardly help smiling. “ At least they mean to have their tea presently,” said he turning to quit the dreary dining-room.

“ No, Captain Luttrell,” said Robinson, sinking his voice to a mysterious solemnity ; “ the family have tea’d already.”

“ The deuce they have !” said Hartley, opening his eyes wider, as the pardonable approach to an oath escaped his lips ; and Robinson, correcting his report, explained that it referred only to the ladies.

“ My master and Mr. Francis have not, to my knowledge, Captain Luttrell, taken anything since you left the house ; but I understand from Mrs. Meke, the lady’s-maid, that all the ladies tea’d in their respective apartments.”

“ Oh, very well,” said Hartley, wondering more and more at the family arrangements ; “ is my father in the library ?” Robinson, standing civilly, but

resolutely, in the doorway, was beginning to explain that Mr. Luttrell had issued a peremptory order, that he was on no account to be disturbed that night—not even by Captain Luttrell; when a quick, light tread was heard, and Mr. Pickering, rushing past the butler, motioned him out of the room; then, flinging the door to, and approaching Hartley, with a letter in his outstretched hand, he exclaimed, “It’s false! of course, it’s false: no friend of yours can suppose there’s a word of truth in such a story—utterly improbable and absurd. But read it, my dear Hartley: just glance your eye over this letter (it arrived immediately after your departure for Maddox-street), and tell us in a word, how the idle tale has arisen, and what interest any one can have in fabricating a report of—of so wild and—and, in fact, of so impossible a character.”

The little man, all nervous irritability, kept his eyes fixed anxiously on Luttrell as he spoke, and expatiated on the fulness of his convictions, exactly in proportion to the increase of his doubts; for though Hartley received the letter with a look of unaffected surprise, yet a single glance at the signature was sufficient, without any further investigation, to enlighten him as to the nature of its contents: the name of Charlotte Carew explained but too clearly the cause of all which had seemed strange to him in the aspect of his father’s house—the utter dispersion of his family, and their common neglect of dinner.

His secret was discovered! His wife’s mother had been beforehand with him, and thus he was deprived of the slight advantage he might have

gained in choosing his own time and opportunity for the confession, or the merit of making it in a bold and handsome manner. As the conviction flashed across him, therefore, his expression of face grew less satisfactory to the Reverend Thomas ; who, gesticulating vehemently as he rose on the tips of his little toes, and talking himself completely out of breath, felt (though he would not own it) that the case looked desperate !

Not a word spoke Luttrell, as he scanned this most important epistle ; nor did it take him long to read. Perhaps it was Mrs. Carew's good taste which prompted her to preserve the utmost simplicity of diction ; or she might well have felt that the secret she was communicating was too striking, in its plainest form of narrative, to require any amplification ; for nothing could be more concise than her mode of revealing it : no material fact omitted to testify the truth of her statement, every date set down with chronological accuracy, but destitute of comment or remark : except that, in conclusion, she strove to exonerate her daughter from the blame attaching to a clandestine union ; on the ground that her extreme youth, when her marriage took place, and habits of obedience to maternal authority, rendered her scarcely responsible for anything that happened. For her own conduct she offered neither justification nor excuse, and only mentioned the name of Captain Luttrell when its introduction became requisite.

“ But it's all a mistake, Hartley ?—there can't be a particle of truth in such a story ? Eh ? ” per-

sisted Mr. Pickering, watching his young friend's rapid eye, as it descended to the last paragraph of the despatch. "Eh, my dear Hartley? tell me that it is a base fabrication, from beginning to end?"

"No, Mr. Pickering," said Hartley, looking up with a conscious shake of the head, "it is no fabrication—it is true, every word of it; and but for my summons to poor Hamilton, and the other strange events of this day, my own recital of the story would have anticipated Mrs. Carew's. But the fact is as she writes it. I *am* the husband of her daughter: we were legally united before I left England."

Mr. Pickering uttered an exclamation of horror; and Luttrell, pressing his hand on his chest, and drawing a deep breath, went on:—

"And, now that I have answered you, I also have a question to ask, which I entreat you will reply to unreservedly. Tell me, sir, what is the meaning of this strange cry that I hear raised against Selby—against my wife? Of what do they accuse her? What has she done? She who was so highly spoken of in all the letters that reached me during her stay at Horton; and now, except my mother, there is not one of my family who does not seem to have thrown her off. What does it mean, Mr. Pickering? Speak, sir: I demand an explanation of all this."

But poor Mr. Pickering was past the exercise of speech. In defiance of the plainest evidence, for Mrs. Carew's letter carried conviction in every sentence, he had obstinately refused to believe any portion of its unpalatable contents; and though he had failed to inspire the rest of the household with these

hopes, he had succeeded pretty well in the endeavour of keeping up his own spirits.

Now, all was over ! self-deception at an end ! Instead of the immediate and contemptuous denial he had reckoned on, he heard his old pupil, whom he loved almost as well as if he had been his son, and in whose reputation he took a personal pride,—he heard him clearly and directly own to a fact, which, in the opinion of the good little man, must prove the ruin of himself, and little less than a mortal blow to his parents. “Mr. Luttrell could never forgive—Mrs. Luttrell could never get over it ! The prosperity of that house was gone for ever !”

Mr. Pickering’s affectionate nature could not stand the representation his fancy conjured up : he was literally crying like a child. And if he had studied the likeliest method of awakening the compunction of Hartley Luttrell, he could not have found one more effectual : there is something in man’s nature so repugnant to this womanish expression of feeling ! For keen and unmeasured reproach Hartley was fully prepared : anger he might have repelled, scorn would but have irritated him ; but to behold his fellow-man, and that man his former preceptor, brought thus low in the scale of human degradation—Mentor sobbing over the backslidings of Telemachus—it struck him as something monstrous and unnatural, and embarrassed even more than it provoked him.

And then, when the Reverend Thomas did regain his voice, sufficiently to treat of the subject so immediately interesting to Luttrell,—the conduct of his wife,—his agitation rendered the narrative so broken and

confused, and his despondency threw such a tinge of the lamentable over everything, that Selby was little likely, through any report of his, to be exalted in the eyes of her husband. Nor can we absolve Mr. Pickering from the charge of taking a certain malicious pleasure in describing Carew's disgraceful entanglement with Mrs. Bradshaw : of all which Captain Luttrell, who had not received any letter relating to the subject, was still entirely ignorant.

Horried as Pickering was with the transgression of his ex-pupil, the little man could not bring himself to condemn, in more than shrug and inuendo, the character of her who was now declared to all intents and purposes Mrs. Hartley Luttrell : but this delicacy stood not her father in stead. Hereupon he detailed and amplified ; and Hartley listened with a burning cheek, and feelings of extreme disgust. For, though the father's degradation ought not to affect the child, it was hardly in the power of one trained up as Luttrell had been, not to perceive that it cast an additional shade over a reputation already sullied ; and he also saw how greatly a scandal of this sort must increase the aversion of his family towards any further connection with the Carews. Groaning in spirit, and scarcely more master of himself than his old friend had been, Luttrell paced up and down that sombre dining-room ; and, as Mr. Pickering's narration of the Carew enormities drew to a close, and even he, angry as he was, began to think the young man's misery pretty complete, he threw himself into a chair, and a melancholy silence reigned between them ; as it did over the whole house.

And now, for the sake of dealing out retributive justice, I would fain calculate—if such estimation were possible—how long it would require for a man, so proud and sensitive as Luttrell, to remain a prey to the deepest mortification and self-reproach; in order to atone for the one rash act of youth which had made him a husband—a being responsible before Heaven and to society for the conduct of another besides himself; and also to serve in some degree as penance, for the part, equally stubborn and paltry, which he had maintained ever since his marriage.

It sounded mighty well, in his answers to his mother-in-law's importunate epistles, to stand upon his lordly prerogative, and announce his fixed resolution of waiting, and causing his wife to wait, until the exact period when it should please him to declare their marriage; but, trace his motives to their source, and what did the simple truth amount to?—but that he refused to own it, because he was afraid, even in writing, to encounter his father's wrath and his mother's lamentations, the scorn of his grandmother and the contemptuous surprise of the rest of his kin.

Enlightened by the adverse course of events now revealed to him, he could see that his conduct had been little else than a base truckling to family prejudices; which, as the husband of a Carew, he should have removed, if possible, but have braved, if necessary. To this weakness of his might be traced the accumulated evils that threatened the peace and honour of his domestic career; for, had Selby appeared in society as his acknowledged wife, Captain

Romilly would never have dared to raise his thoughts to her, nor could their names have become so scandalously associated. Thus, public opinion might justify him in charging her with frailty, and Romilly with gross misconduct; as his mortal enemy, he might be called on to pursue the friend who was once only second in his esteem to poor Hamilton himself: but, though the world might exonerate him for any severity towards the seducer or the seduced, his conscience would for ever be goaded with the reflection, that every misfortune which had befallen him had sprung originally from his own moral cowardice.

Then, starting from this humiliating idea, he asked himself, with a feeling of wonder amounting almost to incredulity, whether it were really possible that she, the woman henceforth to be called his wife, could have acted so as to justify his father's antipathy? And, the half-uttered accusations still hissing as it were in his ears, he thought of her girlish face as she had knelt beside him at the altar, so sad and tearful, yet so redolent of what then seemed to him the most devoted affection; and then her image crossed him, such as he had seen it but a few hours ago, with that lofty look of virtuous anger impressed on every lovely feature. Was it possible that, in the interval between these periods, she could have gone astray? or was she but acting a part throughout?

That letter of Romilly's seemed fearfully to corroborate this latter idea; for he remembered that, in the young man's glowing description of his aversion to Miss Drake, and his irresistible passion for the fair

Carew, he never seemed to doubt his influence over Selby, or her readiness to reciprocate his affection, supposing him free to address her. For, indeed, his communication with Hartley was only the consequence of that false impression which Carew had given him respecting the state of his daughter's heart; and when poor Romilly unburthened his soul, and sought advice from his friend, it was under the happy but blind belief, that delicacy and consideration for the heiress, alone interfered to prevent a more decided and flattering display of feeling on the part of Selby; so that, without actually telling Luttrell on what his hopes were grounded, he did not conceal from him that they were of the most sanguine nature.

With every word of that letter full in his memory, and stinging him afresh to the verge of desperation, Hartley started up to seek some change of place: at least to avoid the irritating spectacle of his old tutor's hopeless dejection; when, lo! a third was added to their gloomy *tête-à-tête*. Mr. Francis came straight from the presence of his brother; he had witnessed the horror occasioned to all the family by the receipt of Mrs. Carew's letter, and especially the agony of Mr. Luttrell himself—whom he had, with difficulty, prevented from pouring imprecations on the head of the son, who had so grievously angered and disappointed him. Yet, undismayed and unruffled by the general distress, the first glimpse of his face sufficed to bring a something of hope and consolation to the sinking soul and troubled conscience of his nephew; and Hartley threw himself into his arms with the

feeling of old times, when uncle Francis was his constant refuge in any childish woe, real or imaginary.

“My dearest uncle!” The embrace was heartily returned, and that cheerful voice spoke volumes in a single second.

“Hartley, my dear fellow, don’t suffer yourself to be cast down. Things may look a little uncomfortable for a short time: your father, of course, feels deeply what has just transpired—*that* you must have anticipated; and just for this evening, it may be as well that you do not present yourself in that quarter; but fear nothing for the future: they will, they *must*, discover at last—even your father himself cannot fail, in the end, to acknowledge—what a treasure they have all acquired in that charming Selby, your sweet, young wife! As for me, my dear, I congratulate you a thousand times; and hold myself only too much obliged to you for bringing such an ornament into our family circle;” and then the uncle and nephew shook hands more strenuously than ever.

“But how is it, my dear uncle,” cried Luttrell, surprised as well as relieved by such a salutation, —“how is it that you mention my poor Selby in a tone so different from all the others?” In fact, the old gentleman’s own style had changed considerably since last he spoke^{*} upon the subject.

“Simply,” replied Mr. Francis, “because, I have been better acquainted with her; and because, from the first, I was never involved so deeply in their prejudices against the name of Carew. Bless me! Mr. Pickering, what is the matter now?” for the

dissentient gestures of that gentleman were much too expressive to escape Mr. Francis's indignant observation. "I am ready, sir, if called upon, to repeat my words; not only in your presence, but in the face of the whole universe. I am ready to assert, without a shadow of reservation, that a more high-minded and unexceptionable young lady than Miss Carew—I mean Mrs. Hartley Luttrell" (here Pickering groaned audibly), "a character, I say, sir, of more sterling merit and manners, of more feminine delicacy——"

Mr. Francis grew very dignified and almost fierce, as he pronounced this glowing panegyric; while the other, sighing lamentably, and throwing up his hands and eyes, interrupted him with "God grant it may turn out better than we think! God in his mercy grant!"

"Don't be profane, Mr. Pickering!"

"Mr. Francis!" cried the little man, jumping to his feet, and looking highly offended. "Oh, I see how it is: I am not wanted here!" and off he was whisking; when Hartley, pursuing him ere he could leave the room, drew him back by main force, and then—with a look of appeal towards his uncle, and many a soothing expression, accompanied by that winning grace which had probably perilled more female hearts than the two particularized in the foregoing pages—softened the mortified spirit of the Reverend Thomas, and produced a handsome apology from Mr. Francis.

"For truly," he observed, "there is dissension enough already in the house, without our taking

to quarrelling. Nay, nay, my good friend, I must have no symptoms of despondency here. I tell you, all will be well at last: a little time, patience, and cool reflection, is all that is requisite. And, in the mean while, to keep up our spirits the better, let us have something to eat; we shall see everything under quite a different aspect, when we have had something in the shape of dinner: for I presume, Hartley, you are as dinnerless or supperless as the rest of us, with such a scene as you have just gone through with poor Hamilton. Is it really all up with our poor friend?"

Hartley shook his head.

"Ha, I feared as much! and the lovely widow?"

"Dreadfully overcome."

"Ah, exactly! quite disconsolate, I dare say: but I shall err in my knowledge of the female character, if that fair friend of ours remains utterly inconsolable."

"You surprise me! Surely there could not be a more attached——"

"Oh, incomparable as a wife!" interrupted his uncle; "precisely so: a perfect pattern for that kind of thing. But ring the bell, Hartley, and we will have something laid for us in the little breakfast parlour: this room has the air of a cavern, unless lighted for company."

Then leading the way to the smaller and snugger apartment, the trio was soon established over a comfortable collation; of which even the most desponding soon found the benefit, cheered as it was by the unabating spirits of Mr. Francis. Of course, the

recent events of the campaign, and the ultimate prospects of Captain Luttrell and the country at large, formed the chief topics of discourse, while Robinson and his myrmidons hovered about the table; but no sooner was the wine placed and the servants withdrawn, than the old gentleman entered earnestly upon the subject so engrossing to them all; explaining everything, to his own satisfaction at least, and patiently resolving every doubt which tormented his nephew.

There were, indeed, some things which even he could not altogether account for; but from his intimate acquaintance with the fair Carew, he was able to explain so much of her conduct, that from thence its general propriety might be easily adduced. Even the extraordinary charge which had struck Luttrell as so unaccountable—which pointed to his uncle himself as another victim of this universal coquette, was touched upon in an easy and cursory manner.

“There was actually an absurd idea taken hold of, which I merely allude to, to convince you, my dear Hartley, how utterly blinded—I was nearly saying besotted—people may be by trusting to their silly preconceptions;” hereupon Mr. Pickering looked wiser than was necessary, and wondered, within himself, whether Miss Carew approved the pattern of those pearl ear-rings.

Though all which related to Selby must needs be important to her husband, he listened, with peculiar interest, to the account his uncle gave of the half sort of confidence that had escaped her: the confession of an attachment to somebody in the military

line—"for you have no conception, Hartley, how adroitly I made out the nature of your profession; though your name was, of course, concealed from me. And then I own that, like the rest, I did the dear girl some injustice; for which, I assure you, I do not easily forgive myself. For when our meddling old friend, over the way, came with his silly stories about young Romilly, I did begin to fancy a hundred odd things, that, knowing her so intimately as I do, ought never to have sullied my thoughts: but now, all is clear as noonday—transparent as the finest crystal!" said the old gentleman, growing poetical, as he wound up his story: "She was thinking of you, you rogue, all the time! Ah! had she but placed a little more trust in me, it would have saved a world of mischief: but no matter;" and Mr. Francis ended by giving his reasons for believing that all would come round in time.

Despite the fatigues and excitements of the day, it was late before they separated; and as Hartley handed Mr. Francis his candlestick, and opened the door for him, his eye, travelling over that gentleman's erect and well-preserved person, lighted on something that must have struck him as a novelty; for he remarked that there had been a change in the fashions since his residence abroad—"You certainly are not dressing as you did, when I left England? though I hardly know what the change consists in; but I think it's the hair, uncle: you are wearing your hair differently."

"Am I, my dear?" said the old gentleman, innocently, as with a careless action he drew his hand

through the aspiring top-knot. "Well, perhaps you may be right, though I really know little about it. At my time of life, it would be the height of absurdity to trouble myself about costume—in fact, worse than absurdity. But you know, one's hair must be cut occasionally, whether one's old or young; and then, Truefitt (*he's my man*) does just what he likes with me : I leave it all to Truefitt. God bless you, my dear boy, and happy dreams to you, after all your perils abroad, and perplexities at home !"

CHAPTER XIII.

It must be confessed there was little in the aspect of the house the next morning, to justify the very sanguine language held by Mr. Francis Luttrell overnight: the same doleful stillness reigned throughout; and Hartley, as at an early hour he issued from his room to proceed direct to Maddox-street, was summoned with ominous formality to his father's presence.

His uncle, indeed, bade him "never mind," and promised to be his *avant-courier* at Mrs. Dawes's; but, independently of the present disappointment, the young man's impatient spirit revolted against the ordeal awaiting him at home. And yet it was different from what he had anticipated: he went to that interview, preparing himself for keen invective levelled at himself, and the most contemptuous mention of his wife; but the trial he had to sustain consisted neither in reproach nor sarcasm, but in the undeniable conviction now forced upon him, of the utter disappointment and hopeless misery which he had been the means of bringing on his parents.

His father, to whom he was first admitted, seemed to have bent his energies to the preserving a sort of

Roman fortitude: his voice did not falter as he addressed him, but its tones were suppressed and unnatural; and his brow seemed to be furrowed more by suffering than actual anger.

The name of Carew was not once pronounced, and the circumstance which gave to that name such a powerful significance amongst the Luttrels, was only darkly alluded to, as a blow equally strange and overwhelming. One might have thought the inexorable fate of the old Greek drama had been exercising its influence over that devoted family, and that the head of the house regarded his son less as a voluntary offender against the wishes and interests of his race, than as a blind instrument in the hand of the Deity, through which the sternest decrees were doomed to be enforced. He, the heir of the Luttrels, their boast, their darling—the tried soldier, the accomplished man—in short, their own Hartley! degraded into the son-in-law of the vagabond John Carew and his vixen wife! Oh, immeasurable, unpronounceable calamity! The hours that had passed since that electrifying disclosure, had scarcely sufficed to render the fact conceivable. And there sat the elder Luttrell, gazing on his recreant child with an expression of cold amazement; more irritating, and yet more affecting to Hartley's feelings, than the fiercest denunciation of paternal wrath: scanning every feature and line of his face, as though he would fain discover some indication of the mysterious weakness which had betrayed him to his ruin.

Notwithstanding his previous good resolutions, the

high-spirited young man found his patience scarcely equal to supporting the scene much longer; indeed he felt that he should degrade not only himself, but the woman he had solemnly endowed with his name, affection, and worldly goods, if he did not attempt something, however slight or unavailing, by way of defence or apology. In as few words as possible, therefore, and in as respectful a tone as he could command, he intimated that, though he would say nothing to justify the prudence (in a worldly sense) of the alliance he had formed, yet he trusted the time might not be very remote, when the merits of her to whom he was united would overcome all the prejudices of his family. Mr. Luttrell made no reply: he did not even seem to have caught the sense of his son's observation; but as Hartley was preparing to leave the room, he recalled him by a question, simple as it was short:—

“Have you yet been informed,” said he, “that your father-in-law is likely to be tried for bigamy?”

Repressing his feelings with some difficulty, Hartley replied,—“Surely, sir, it is not for us to visit the sins of a father upon his child.”

“Most true, Hartley!” said Mr. Luttrell, resuming his solemnity. “Most true! for if that rule held good on earth as well as in heaven, *my* iniquities must have been of the deepest dye!”

Stung by the very severe sarcasm implied in these words, the young man hurried from his father's presence; but had not gone many steps, when his impetuous movements had nearly carried him into the

arms of Lady Sarah Wigram, who was just then feebly advancing up the stairs, leaning on the hand of her confidential woman. A letter to her niece from Captain Romilly was the cause of this unseasonable visit—a letter, in which, in language as delicate and respectful as he could use, he relinquished his engagement to Miss Drake, and, acknowledging the indefensibility of his conduct, entreated her to forget that so miserable a creature as himself had ever existed to annoy her.

Hurrying to communicate this final extinction of her lingering hopes for poor Sophia, Lady Sarah, for the first time in her life, left her home unrouged and unringleted, to seek counsel and condolence from her confidential friends, the Luttrels; and, so thoroughly had the absence of her usual embellishments metamorphosed the unhappy aunt of a niece still more distracted, that Hartley made way for her as for an utter stranger; and it was only as she vanished from his view, that he recognised in those shrivelled features, sharpened by anxiety, and swollen with hard weeping, the frivolous, affected old lady, who had always had a kind word, or a present, to bestow upon him, even in his most disagreeable phase of boyhood: what particular period that may be, let mothers and nurses decide on the last day of the ensuing holidays.

As for Lady Sarah, her thoughts were all so intently running on another young man, that she hardly noticed this one; till her attendant, infinitely more on the alert, whispered in her ear,—

“La! my lady, it’s the captain!”

Now the jolly god of day shone on many captains that morning; but there was only one in the world for Lady Sarah, and she answered despondingly,—

“Not Captain Romilly, Briggs!”

“No, my lady; it’s Captain Luttrell himself.”

“Dear, dear! how my memory is failing me!” said her poor old mistress, and thereupon began to cry.

Luttrell, who had by this time recalled the lineaments of his old friend, and caught her sigh of affliction, felt more touched than many a man in his circumstances might have thought necessary; but he could not avoid connecting this vision of woe, once so full of fine-lady airs, and comfortable little affectations, with the mournful drama now enacting in his own family, and strongly surmised, that the very want of that rouge and those well-remembered canary-coloured curls, might somehow be laid to the door of himself and his wife. Lovely and charming was the fair Carew, yet it chafed him to perceive how she had seemed to blight the prosperity of all within the sphere of her influence.

Another turning—another passage—and, lo! another old woman stood before him; but, luckily in her case, no mournful reflections were to be suggested: Mrs. Grey remained precisely what he had left her, the same placid, sensible little person, with not a single wrinkle more or less developed. She was beckoning him into his mother’s room, but the young man hesitated; for it seemed to him nearly pitch dark, so blinded was every window, every

cranny through which the wholesome light of day might have entered.

“Is she ill?” he asked.

“Rather poorly,” was the reply; “but thinks herself worse than she is. However, Captain Luttrell, as you must meet in the long run, if you’ll take my advice, the sooner you get it over the better.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Luttrell, reluctantly; “but, good Heavens, Mrs. Grey! what parade of affliction is all this? the room darkened, and my mother lying as if she were at the point of death: if I had brought some deadly disgrace upon them all, they could not bear it worse!” He forced himself to approach the bed where Mrs. Luttrell lay, her eyes averted, and her attitude descriptive of the deepest grief.

Hartley uttered a few words, to what intent he hardly knew; for his patience was fast giving way, and he feared he should act his part but awkwardly. Whatever he said, however, he found that a low sob was to be his only reply; and the hand which lay upon the quilt, and which he dutifully ventured to take, returned no friendly pressure, but lay in his grasp, cold and listless. He was, indeed, disappointed!—surprised beyond measure. His father’s conduct he could comprehend; but from his mother he had expected a much more genial behaviour: she who had known and acknowledged the merits of Carew’s daughter, had spoken even gratefully of her attentions,—how strange and inconsistent all this!

The young husband stood for a few, a very few, seconds by the bedside, his heart swelling with mor-

tification and annoyance; and then he departed, to find (if he could) in the society of her for whose sake he had lost the favour of his parents, that comfort which was denied him at home.

The lodgings in Maddox-street, displaying in their shuttered windows the outward evidences of death, struck Luttrell as ominous of further calamity; and when, as the door was opened to him, he saw his uncle, who had for some minutes preceded him there, hurrying down the stairs—not, apparently, to greet him, but to arrest his onward progress—he felt a conviction that something frightful was yet to be told.

“It’s of no use your coming up, my dear Hartley: Selby is gone: she left the house early this morning.”

“Gone!” cried Luttrell, starting back; for his father’s prophecy rushed to his remembrance.

The horror of his nephew’s countenance enlightened Mr. Francis as to the error into which he had unintentionally led him.

“No, no,” he exclaimed, hastily; “not that: how could you dream of such a thing? Look at this letter which the dear girl has addressed to me: see how distorted is the writing, so descriptive of the agony of her mind.”

Hartley snatched it from him and read:—“Dear Mr. Francis,—When this reaches you, I shall be many miles from London; for I cannot remain here: at least, not in this house—not in the same place with that dreadful Mrs. Hamilton. I am on my way to my dear old friends at Stukely: if any one should

take an interest in a creature so every way forlorn and unhappy, they will know where to find me. Perhaps, situated as I am, it may seem a sort of impertinence to address you at all; but, in days when you thought better of me than you possibly do now, you promised to befriend me, though I should be deserted by all the world. If you, dearest Mr. Francis, have forgotten these words, I have not: in this hour of utter affliction they are my only consolation, and I think you will not recall them."

Selby had signed only her Christian name to this agitated scrawl; for, still ignorant of her mother's disclosure, she knew not how far Mr. Francis was yet in possession of her secret. She had been gone, Mrs. Dawes told them, three hours at least, having been up packing half the night; and had departed as soon as a chaise could be procured.

And now there remained but one thing to be done. Miss Carew had had only the usual number of horses to her chaise; Captain Luttrell must order an additional pair to his, and follow her with all the speed he could. Ascertaining, therefore, the nearest place for obtaining a post carriage, and adding a respectful message of condolence for the disconsolate Alicia, the gentlemen hurried off. Their colloquy with the discreet but much wondering Dawes had taken place in muttered accents: everything in that house of mourning must proceed in whispers.

We leave the reader, nevertheless, to guess how long it might be, after the departure of the Luttrells, ere the substance of all this whispering reached the fair mourner, and she was admitted to share in the

surprise of the rencontre—if, indeed, new-made widows can find time or inclination to marvel at anything beside the stroke which has just bereaved them.

Again, had Selby unwittingly acted so as to excite, in the liveliest manner, the awakening ardour of her husband. Had she waited, as perhaps, conjugally speaking, it was her duty to have done—waited quietly in Mrs. Dawes's little drawing-room, until it consoled with Captain Luttrell's convenience to come and claim her once more as his own; Heaven knows what matrimonial bickerings such perfect leisure and uninterrupted opportunity might not have engendered; or how often the names of Romilly and Hamilton might not have been interchanged between the married pair, to their mutual and perpetual discomfort. But man—it is an old but true remark—is specially a sporting animal, and the wilder and shyer the game, the more hotly does he follow upon its track; and by so much the more does he value the prey when his own exertions have brought it fairly within gunshot.

Not half so dear, so intensely interesting to Captain Luttrell was the image of Selby Carew allowing herself, in passive composure, to be given up to him at the altar of St. Margaret Moses, as now that she was flying from his embraces: more enticing to him this display of peevish intractability, than if she had sported the highest attainments of patient Grisselism. Excuse, oh reader! that composite word, not to be found in any known dictionary; for, behold! I, like my hero, am nearing the goal of my desires—the last page of this eventful history; and I cannot stick at

trifles, or slacken my pen from respect to orthography.

“That letter to uncle Francis: what meaning lay in every word! the dear creature did not condescend even to write to *him*. How jealous she must be! What torments—wretch that he was!—he was causing her to suffer! And yet, not he, it was the love she had so faithfully cherished for him; that deep affection from which jealousy is known to be inseparable: this it was that was urging her to fly from the man who adored her more fondly than ever. Oh, that he had the wings of an eagle to trust to, instead of those four miserable hacks!”

Forlorn, indeed, was the condition of poor Selby, as, at an humbler pace, she preceded her husband along that hot and dusty road; at one moment applauding herself for the spirited part she was acting, at another, relapsing into self-distrust; fearing she had been over hasty, passionate, unkind. Her vain reflections were ever interrupted by the question of how her flight would affect him? Would he be sorry that she was gone? would he recall, would he follow her? Would he not rather rejoice that, through her own wilfulness, she was widening the gulf that yawned between them?

She had not journeyed above three stages, when she stopped at a road-side inn; so subdued in spirit, so weakened by fatigue and fasting, that she was glad of the support afforded her by the substantial arm of the fat landlady, who came curtsying to the chaise-door to receive her. And yet, though thirsting for repose, she lingered, as she entered the house, and

her eyes wandered wistfully back upon the road she had travelled: and when, like sister Anne, she saw nothing but a flock of sheep in the distance, a sigh burst from her bosom, so deep and sorrowful, that it sounded like the resignation of her last earthly hope.

She laid herself down on the little sofa in the inn parlour, and assured the kind but much too officious hostess, that she should be better for the tea she promised to make ready for her: but, in her heart, Selby firmly believed she should never leave that house alive. There had been moments in her life when the thought would have soothed, and not afflicted her: but now, she said to herself, "Mr. Hamilton is gone, and I shall follow him; and then ——" and she shrank from the approach of that which would perfect the unholy joy of those who had destroyed her.

So possessed was the wretched Selby with this idea, that she hesitated in her intention of proceeding to Stukely; judging it a selfish act to burthen her kind old friends with such a guest. This house, though humble in its accommodations, was good enough to die in: it was quiet and retired; a retreat only too convenient for so weak and erring a creature. Here would she stay, seeking a more effectual aid than her own slight efforts afforded her, for subduing her false hopes and earthly passions; and patiently awaiting the extinction of those faculties, which she felt to be so quickly and surely giving way, that she doubted if the midnight hour would find her still a breathing inhabitant of this miserable world. The tea was brought, she could not drink it: feeble and

heart-stricken, her wasting energies hardly sufficed for warding off the attentions of her hostess, or the bodily intrusion of the village doctor, whose merits the proprietress of the Rising Sun poured forth with untiring loquacity.

“ Would the sick lady but send for Dr. Biggs ! such a fine gentleman as the doctor was ! he had cured her good man of the rheumatiz when all the other doctors had given him up ; and now he’s bringing my Tommy through the worst fit of the mumps as ever you see, ma’am.” Really, it seemed to the good landlady that the very name of her favourite mediciner possessed something of a healing charm, let alone his presence and prescriptions ; for as she thus ran on, she observed a striking change in the complexion and demeanour of her interesting guest : there was a quickening of the pulse and a kindling of the eye, a sudden start and an eager glance at the half-open door.

Could it be that, above the chattering of her hostess, and certain extraneous sounds increased by a fresh arrival at the house, her faithful ear—more expectant than she in her supposed hopelessness was aware—had indeed distinguished *his* voice inquiring for her ? that voice, never by her to be mistaken ? In another moment she had risen unassisted, had flown to the door, and was in the arms of a tall gentleman, who, entering with as quick a step, caught the fair wanderer to his heart ; “ looking for all the world,” as the landlady described the scene, “ as if he was going to eat her up at a mouthful ! ”

In company with that respectable person let us

retire, and shutting the parlour door after us, leave the wedded lovers to the unspeakable joy of their meeting. In the jealous flight on one side, and the successful pursuit on the other, each recognised, without further shadow of distrust, the constancy which had sustained, unshaken, the wear and tear of absence and of years: explanation might ensue, and the mistakes and misapprehensions of the past be often canvassed; but these would be mingled with happy tears and playful reproaches, and would serve rather for the entertainment of their future hours, than form the necessity of the present moment.

The wooden clock which hung on the staircase of the Rising Sun—it was a cuckoo clock, bringing in every chime a cheerful remembrance of the spring that was past, and a hopeful anticipation of many springs to come,—that rude but faithful piece of Dutch machinery, striking duly the hours, in their course, came at length to that of twelve—midnight: the hour at which Selby Carew, we beg her pardon, Mrs. Hartley Luttrell had reckoned on leaving this troubled existence to become a disembodied spirit, qualified to haunt the couch of Mrs. Hamilton, or do any other feat which the ghost of a love-lorn gentlewoman is competent to perform! Yet the mimic-bird had opened his little wooden door, and shut it with a slam, and had said his simple lesson without missing a note: but though he kept his faith with the public, she kept not hers; for Selby survived, not only that midnight hour, but many a succeeding one; living to bless the beneficent hand which had brought her, through many trials, to the haven where she de-

sired to be—the bosom of her beloved and doating husband.

And now, having no further apprehension of dying at the Wollastons, she and her husband judged it fittest that she should prosecute her first intention of proceeding to the vicarage ; which, in the present uncertain state of their affairs, offered her so desirable an asylum. Despatching, therefore, due notice of their approach, and a slight sketch of their previous adventures and present position, the young couple continued their journey at a leisurely pace, and arrived safely at Stukely ; much to the joy, and also to the wonder, of the good old people : for they could never be made thoroughly to understand how any family, however dignified in its own or the world's opinion, could object to receiving their dear Miss Carew as one of its members : nor, indeed, was there any necessity to enlighten them too completely on a subject which must have proved so painful to them. It sufficed that family reasons—obstacles annoying for the present, but soon to be surmounted—induced Captain Luttrell to wish that his wife should remain with them for a short time : and truly, in the bright looks of both their visitors, and especially in the devoted attachment demonstrated by the bridegroom, there was the fullest pledge that could be demanded for the future felicity of their young favourite.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING always carefully eschewed the last few pages of a novel—the tendency of which, to a discerning reader, must ever be so plainly apparent as to render their perusal little less than a work of supererogation—I would fain shorten the task, by sketching one of those theatrical situations common in the days of old romance and sentimental story; where the hero and heroine, whose fortunes have filled the four, five, or six preceding volumes, are wont to finish their adventures in the most approved style, by sinking gracefully at the feet of their displeased elders: the hearts of whom—up to this very moment, so resolved and inexorable, so bent on cutting off the offending pair with a curse and a shilling—are suddenly melted to tenderness and pity.

But the pleasant times, when writers and readers were so easily satisfied, has long passed away; the former must indite what they know will be read without interest, and the latter, while they condemn the mawkishness of the last chapter, require that it should contain a touch of reality to connect it with what has gone before. Truth, therefore,

obliges me to say, that no concluding scene of this sort occurred amongst the Luttrels. It had ever seemed to them a fact, as sure as it was desirable, that the heir of their house was, in his matrimonial relations, to increase its importance and support its respectability; and when they found that their glowing expectations were all merged in the daughter of John Carew, it was long ere they could bring themselves to endure the thought with seemly resignation, or admit into their exclusive circle the bride their son had so rashly chosen: many an anxious day had Luttrell and his young wife to wait, many a rebuff to suffer, many a mortification to digest, before the penalty of that rashness was paid.

And, singular as it may seem to those who have been made acquainted with Mrs. Luttrell's gentle manners—how fondly she had distinguished the fair Carew, and what pleasure she took in her society; this lady was the one who, of all the elders of her house, evinced the deepest disappointment in the connection with her, and the strongest reluctance to a reconciliation. On the other hand, it was the proud, determined Mrs. Damer, from whom originally the young people expected the deadliest opposition, who eventually stood most their friend. With all her violence of temper and expression, she was a woman of strong judgment; and when the first torrent of her indignation had spent itself, she was ready to adopt the common-sense view of the question, and to make the best of what was irremediable: reminding Mr. Luttrell and her daughter, that the public would take its cue from their behaviour; and

that it behoved them, for their own sakes, to throw over this unlucky marriage as great an aspect of respectability as possible.

Long before the gentle Isabella had been persuaded to canvass the subject in a spirit of conciliation, the old lady had had many a sly joke with her grandson; which he constantly retaliated, by assuring her that she herself was the original mover, the primary cause, of his becoming the husband of Selby Carew.

“How should I so much as have dreamed of any of the Carews being within hail of me, if you had not written me that officious letter, advising me to shun their dangerous company? Should I ever have passed the threshold of Quin’s Folly, if the guiding spirit of my grandmother had not led me by the hand? No, no, ma’am, it’s all your doing, depend on it.”

“No such thing, young man; and if I have been a fool in my time, I ought to be heartily ashamed of it now: and it is no business of yours to be making your elders and betters blush for the folly they committed three years ago.”

Of course, the family at the Lodge were able auxiliaries on the peace-making side of the question; for Esther, being once secure that in the fair Carew she had to fear no interloper—no mother-in-law and successor to her rights and privileges—became henceforth as placable and indulgent towards her young cousin, as she had formerly been cold and severe: surveying her as Mrs. Hartley, and not Mrs. Francis Luttrell, she had no difficulty in discovering most of

the feminine attractions she had hitherto refused to acknowledge, and could frankly and sincerely join her father in his commendations of them.

Amongst those things which served to soften the blow of his son's rash marriage to Mr. Luttrell, was the improvement in the prospects of Hartley's father-in-law. Mr. Whitaker's successful exertion in proving the utter worthlessness of Mrs. Bradshaw's testimony—and especially in ascertaining a plurality of husbands on the part of that adventurous fair one, at the very time of Carew's youthful escapade—placed him eventually beyond the reach of her malice or extortion: finding that his lawyer was in possession of her real character, she presently retired from the contest; relieving the Luttrells from all apprehension of having so near a connection shown up disgracefully before the public.

And so, in process of time, cousin John returned home; not to the penury and contempt he merited, but to a life of comfort and consideration—to find himself once more tolerated by his friends: not excepting Lord Elderton himself; who, duped as he had been by him, could never bring himself to shut his doors against one so plausible and ripe for conversion—to be again welcomed in society, and made the object of care to a faithful wife, who saw his faults, yet endured, and even to a certain degree loved him, in spite of them; and who, while she lectured him with occasional asperity, and tried—*not* after the fashion of Lord Elderton—to make a better man of him, would deny herself many a reasonable wish, in order that John might enjoy some indulgence to

which neither her means nor his deserts entitled him.

Captain Luttrell—who, although he allowed that the generous warmth of Mrs. Hamilton's character sometimes led her to the borders of impropriety, yet persisted in upholding the innate purity and conjugal excellence of his old friend's wife—sought her out, immediately on his return to town; being anxious to offer his sincere condolences, and proffers of assistance in any matter of business which her brother might find it convenient to delegate to him, and also to acquaint her formally with his marriage: the circumstances attending which, being somewhat romantic, would, he was sure, prove a subject of high interest to her enthusiastic nature. And so he called upon the beautiful widow; but found himself so coldly received, his friendly attentions so abruptly repelled, and his own affairs treated in a spirit of such sarcastic bitterness, that Hartley felt little inclination to repeat his visit: moreover, his eyes were thenceforth considerably opened to the real state of Mrs. Hamilton's heart and inclinations; and he was led to own (to himself at least) that the lady's manners might have afforded some justification for the jealousy of his wife, and the strong displeasure conceived against her by others of his family.

Captain Romilly prosecuted his military career, and lived and died a bachelor. He had, he was wont in after-life to say, been equally ill-used by Plutus, god of money, and Cupid, god of love: he had made two attempts to get married; one from motives of pure interest, the other inspired

by the warmest affection ; and having been foiled in both cases, he knew not what deity to invoke should he try his fortune a third time. Those who were insufficiently acquainted with him, and with the peculiar circumstances connected with his early adventures, only smiled at the bravado, and annexed to it but little meaning. Such as knew him better, however, regarded Charles Romilly as one, who in an age of cold and worldly calculation, shewed something of the old romantic spirit ; and suspected that the remembrance of his first love was indeed the chief, and perhaps sole cause, of keeping him a solitary dweller on the face of the wide earth, and a fit subject for good little Mrs. Dawes's severest reflections.

In course of time, but by no means so soon as she had wished and expected, Fanny Marsham was herself led to the altar ; but without ever having tasted the felicity she had promised herself in fulfilling the duties of bridesmaid to another. Though frequently cherishing lively hopes of being solicited to fill that important office, she had the mortification of seeing one dear friend after another escaping from the virgin thorn without her being the better for it by so much as a pair of gloves ; and there seemed so positive and peculiar a fate manifested in this constant disappointment in a matter whereon she had particularly set her youthful heart, that she grew to behold in it a moral chastisement for her officious conduct touching the affairs of Miss Drake.

Far otherwise did the events of the last few weeks act upon the reflective nature of Fanny's venerable

entertainer, Mr. Fothergill; for so much had he suffered from the petty anxieties of that period, that whatever approach to hospitality he might occasionally have displayed previously, no symptoms of the sort did he ever afterwards discover. Against all the attempts of friends or acquaintance, rich relations or poor ones, to get footing as resident visitors at his house (were it only for the space of a week), he remained obstinately relentless; and never, from that time till the day when she found herself set down in his will for a bequest of five hundred pounds and the silver coffee-pot, did Mrs. Marsham obtain a bed at No. 47, Great George-street, Westminster. He suffered acutely, incalculably, while she wheedled or bullied him; but never flinched, even before her strong will and female pertinacity.

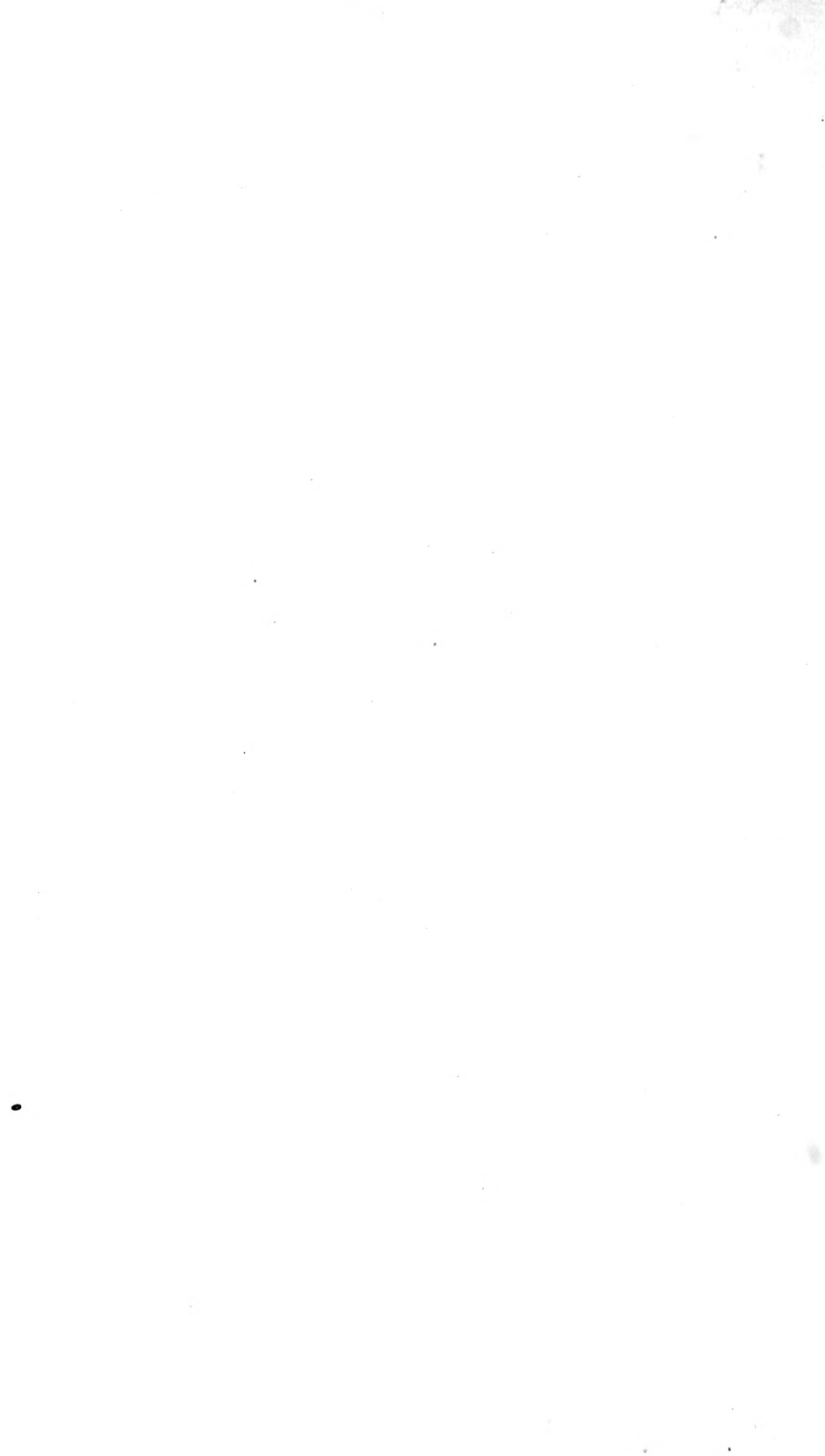
Though Hartley Luttrell had the satisfaction of seeing his wife received at Horton, before resuming his professional duties, it was not until he had fairly left England that her former predilection assumed entire sway in the bosom of his mother. Then, by degrees, came back all the old feelings that had (however unconsciously on one side) bound the mother and the wife together in such strong community. Then came the necessity for talking of her son, and the dear delight of having so true a sympathizer: not, as formerly, the mere recipient of her maternal tautology; but ever ready to echo it, to sing his praises, and to be as fond, and as frightened, and as foolish as herself: more ready, if possible; going beyond the gentle Isabella in all sorts of tender anxieties. For now there was no need to dis-

semble; and often did Mrs. Luttrell find herself in the novel, but not unpleasing predicament, of being the consoler in place of the consoled: of being the one to soften exaggerated difficulties, sweetly chide away false apprehensions, and make the best of war's alarms.

And so it came to pass that, when, after following for a certain time the noble profession he had originally chosen from motives of very secondary consideration—when the enemy was driven from the Peninsula, and Captain (now Colonel) Luttrell, in common with thousands as worthy and well-beloved as himself, was left free to resign (at least for a season) his public duties for the happiness awaiting him in a private station—he returned in health and honour, to find his beloved Selby established in the fullest favour with his family; and, even with his father, the deserving object of their most tender affection, confidence, and esteem.

THE END.











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